

E.E.Moses

GOLDEN IS THE WHEAT

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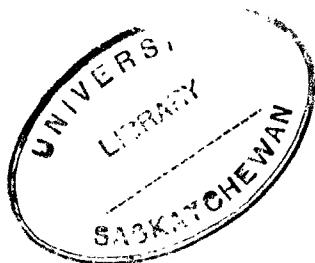
Golden Is the Wheat

A N O V E L B Y

Eva E. Moses
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To Mom and Pop

The towns of Indian Head, Qu'Appelle, McLean, Ketepwa, Fort Qu'Appelle, Weyburn, and Regina, as well as the lake resort of B'Say'Tah and the Lebret Indian School, actually do exist in Saskatchewan; the towns Coulee Hill and Hillsby are fictional. None of the characters of this book ever existed, except in imagination. The countryside of which this novel tells does exist in part, but aside from the general character of the Prairie Provinces and of the people who live in them, this novel is completely fictional, and any resemblance to real persons or events, of the past or present, is purely coincidental.

Contents

BOOK ONE	11
BOOK TWO	91
BOOK THREE	231
AUTHOR'S NOTE	299

Book One

SASKATCHEWAN! PRAIRIE LAND! LAND OF THE GOLDEN WHEAT! Anyone who has ever stood on a Saskatchewan prairie during the month of August and let his eyes wander over acres and acres of swaying, nodding, golden wheat has been awed by the majestic, golden sweep of beauty; and if as he stood and looked an early sun blazed over the horizon, slanting its rays and catching up the golden sparkles of the dew upon the wheat, he could almost believe he gazed at a solid mass of real gold. Small wonder that men from all walks of life and of every nationality were caught in its web, for it seemed to them that they could actually see the gold which would eventually transfer itself to their pockets. But not all years yielded swaying masses of gold, for the prairies could also be bitter and cruel—so learned the Manns when they arrived in this Land of Golden Wheat.

In the year 1911, Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Mann and their two young daughters lived on a small, rocky farm in northern Minnesota, near the Mississippi River, close to a sawmill that hummed and buzzed all day as it cut the towering trees into logs to be floated down the river. It was really a country for woodsmen; each strip of land had to be cleared of trees and rocks before it could be planted.

Pat Mann dreamed almost daily of returning to his native Canada. He'd been born in the eastern province of Ontario, but Grandpa Mann, his father, had moved to the United States when

the children were all young, and there they grew up, married, and raised their families. All were happy except Pat, and as year followed year he had rented first one farm and then another, each one farther north, closer to that magic border between the United States and Canada, until finally it was only to be expected that his next move would carry him across that border into Canada.

For several months he had been in touch with real-estate men, trying to get himself situated for the coming year. One look at his face as he stood in the wagon, which was bumping along over the country road, revealed that he was bursting with news and excitement. Pulling up the team in front of the house, he called a loud whoa to them, jumped down, and started to undo the traces. All the while he shouted at the top of his lungs, "Mary! Betty! Margie! Where the devil are you all? Come out here and listen to the news!" He was a man in his late twenties, with blue eyes which brimmed with Irish wit and mirth; his black, curly hair always seemed to indicate his disposition, for if he was in a good humor the hair was in place, but if his temper was up, up went the hair, too, because when his temper rose his hands flew to his hair to tousle it. Big and muscular, he looked as if he had never been tired a day in his life.

A tall, slender woman emerged from the gray stone house, a quiet-moving, serene woman with heaps of straight black hair piled upon her head, and with gray eyes that were steady and calm. A woman who could rule her house and family without ever giving the appearance of doing so: this was Mary—or Mom, as she was known to her two daughters.

She was followed by two girls, one eleven years old, and the other eight. Eleven-year-old Elizabeth, or Betty, as she was called by the family, was an angular child, all arms and legs, with an oversupply of freckles, but she had eyes like Pat's, twinkling blue ones, and the same curly black hair, hers highlighted with red glints. Margaret, the other child, was a chubby, dimpled little thing with red-gold curls and wide, wondering blue eyes.

Both children were bursting with excitement and curiosity. "What is it, Pop? What's the good news? Did you bring us the candy you promised?" they chorused.

"Candy! Oh, yes, I brought the candy," he answered, "and what's more, good news! What do you think? We are moving to Saskatchewan! What do you say to that, Mary? Wait until you hear how wonderful it's all going to be." He hesitated and looked at them inquiringly, then added, "I'll put the team away and do up the chores, and you, Mary, make us a good supper. We'll celebrate, and I'll relate the whole story to you then!" He started the team to the well for a drink; then he and the team disappeared into the barn.

Mary stood still, and thoughts tumbled through her mind: Oh, dear, once again we must move . . . the children will have to start in another new school . . . and just when my house is beginning to look and feel like home. Won't we ever stay in one place long enough to put down some roots, to feel we are a part of the neighborhood? But no! I guess not till Pat finds his place in the sun. Maybe this time will be it, maybe. . . . She turned to the house to prepare the evening meal.

In answer to Pop's call from the barnyard, the two girls left to give him a hand with the chores.

Everything was peaceful in the barn. The horses chomped oats from their boxes; the sheep were huddled at their picket manger; and each cow stood at her stanchion, munched fodder, and waited to be milked. Soon Mom arrived on the scene to help with the milking. Betty was old enough to give a hand, too, and she milked old Queenie, who was gentle and quiet. There was no talk, just the plop, plop of the milk into the pails. Margie was busy as she rounded up the mamma cat and her family, as it was their suppertime, too. At the barn door was a big yellow-and-white collie dog, known as Trusty, who watched the proceedings with interest.

When the milking and chores were all done, the family returned to the house, and Mom got busy putting final touches to the supper. The milk separator hummed as Pop turned and turned at high speed; the faster he turned the thicker the cream, and the more money it brought at the creamery.

All were finally seated at the table plying knives and forks with energy in order to finish quickly and listen to Pat's story about the new farm. However, Mary broke the silence with a

question. "Pat, did you see Doctor today about the vaccinations for the children? There seems to be an epidemic at school, and I'm worried about the girls catching something."

"Yes, I saw him, but will it be necessary now? The girls will be going to a country school in Saskatchewan, and I don't think they have such runs of epidemics as city schools do. The real-estate man told me the school will be less than a mile from the house. That will be much better—they have to walk two and a half miles now."

"What's a country school? Is it different than in town?" both youngsters asked at once.

Pop's eyes twinkled, and he looked at Mary to see if she was accepting this as eagerly as the children. She smiled her slow smile, which as much as said, "Go on and tell us more."

He pondered for a while, then said, "Well, a country school is out in the country, where there are no stores, just a school, with a big yard around it. A much bigger yard to play in than in town. All the children from all the farms around it for several miles go there. The way the real-estate man explained it to me, the farms are much larger there, and there are fewer towns too, for that country is much newer than this. Not nearly so many people living there as here. Does that make any sense, Mary? Didn't sound very explicit to me, and I doubt the children know what I am talking about."

"Yes, I think it makes sense, dear. I think the girls understand what you mean. By the way, how many acres are in this farm? And what are the house and other buildings like?"

"Well, the man said there was a big barn for the horses and cows, but we will have to sell the sheep, as they don't do so well up there. Then there is a long, low building, which he said could be used for the hogs and chickens. There is a section of land, six hundred and forty acres, and every acre can be planted to wheat, for there are no trees, or rocks, or anything to get in your way."

"Six hundred and forty acres! You can't plant all of that by yourself; that will mean a hired man to help . . . and where in the world is the money coming from to pay him? Where is the money going to come from to pay for seed grain to plant such an

enormous farm? Also, what about the house we are going to live in? You haven't mentioned a word about it—what about the house, anyway?"

Pat laughed and answered her question with caution. "Well, the man didn't talk too much about the house, but he did say there were four rooms; two downstairs, and two up, and that seems plenty of room for us. There is a large room used as a kitchen and place to eat, and the other room can be used for a sitting-room; then upstairs a bedroom for us, and one for the girls."

"Is that so?" she snapped at him. "And pray where is the hired man to sleep—with us, or with the girls? And do you suppose we are always going to be just four? You know as well as I do that before this time next year there will be five of us." She turned to the girls and said, "Come on, let's do up these dishes," and then asked them, "Do you both have your homework done for school tomorrow?"

They assured her their homework was all finished. Betty asked, "Can't we talk some more about our new home?" Then came an afterthought; "Who is coming to live with us next year?"

"Not so many questions, my dear," Mom answered quietly, as she rose and started to stack the dishes. "By the time we get through with these dishes it'll be time for nighties, prayers, and then bed for my two big girls."

She moved to the worktable, placed a dishpan on it, picked up a cake of yellow, homemade soap, tossed it into the pan, and began to pour hot water from the teakettle over it. For all her quiet movements, she was sizzling inside, her Irish temper seething—but she must not display it before the children, and Pat knew too that he must never make a scene if it could be at all avoided.

He sat daydreaming about the whole thing. He was too confident to be very upset, but he knew he had a problem before him to convince Mary. Why did she have to be so damn stubborn every time? Yes, it's sure nice and cozy here, he thought, but . . . before his vision he saw the imaginary fields of wheat, and knew he must see them in reality.

Finally the dishes were done and the girls ready for bed.

They knelt, said their prayers, then jumped into bed. Mary gave a final tuck and pat to the bedclothes, then kissed each girl and whispered, "Good night darlings, sweet dreams!"

"Good night, Mommy," Betty said, "and please let's go to our new home soon."

"Night, Mommy, please let's," said Margie, who was already half asleep.

"Well, we shall see, my dears," she answered their pleas, "but now I'll send Pop in to kiss you both good night."

He came at Mary's nod from the doorway, kissed each one heartily, wished blessings upon them, then tiptoed like a lumbering elephant after Mary. They closed the bedroom door; then Mary braced herself for the usual arguments, which she knew she would lose in the end.

"Please, darlin', are you very angry with me?" Pat asked.

"No, not more than usual, but really, Pat, you don't ever think beyond the end of your nose. I suppose you can't really help it, my dear, but sooner or later you are going to have to stop this everlasting moving each time the urge possesses you. One cannot just pick up and move on all the time, not when there are children growing up. They must live long enough in one place to form friendships, to feel some place is really home." She hesitated, and as Pat said nothing she continued, "And what about the little one on the way? Am I just to pick up, and move to a new place, where I don't know any of the neighbors, not even a doctor? Do you expect me to have my baby all by myself, like the pioneer women had to? I thought in this day and age people were more advanced than that, but it don't seem much so to me."

Pat got up from his chair and went to sit beside her on the sofa. He said, "Please, Mary! Please forgive me, darlin', for being such a thoughtless ass. Of course we can't go; I really had not given too much thought to the new baby, but I can see you are right. Just put the whole thing from your pretty head, and maybe next fall there will be another place we can get. By that time you'll be feeling fit as a fiddle again."

Mary looked at his handsome face, and saw all the light gone from those laughing eyes, even though there was still a smile on his lips, and she knew the argument was over. How could she

fight against this thing, when everything depended on Pat being his laughing, cheerful self? Yes, Betty would love it, too! Margie was too young to feel much of anything about it, but she would love it, because Betty, Mom, and Pop were there. She thought, I'm young and strong, and Betty is becoming a lot of help. They could manage, and Pat should have this dream of his. "Oh Pat, I give in!" she exclaimed. "How can I fight you, when your heart is so set on going? Yes, we shall go . . . but when?"

"Oh, darlin', there never was one in the world like you!" All alive once again, he started rolling over his plans. "Well, first of all, we will have an auction, and sell off the things we don't need to take with us, such as the sheep, hay, and grain. We can't take this grain with us, for they use a different kind up there. I figure we should realize enough cash to see us through, until the crop is harvested next fall, and with the help of the Blessed Saints, we shall manage some way. But you're sure, Mary, that you can manage about yourself, and it won't be too hard on you? I just couldn't stand it, if anything happened to you," and he looked inquiringly at her.

Her face was quiet and serene again, and she answered, with a laugh, "Of course we shall manage; the Manns always manage, don't they?"

The sale was over, and there really was more cash than had been anticipated at first. Friends formed in the short year they had lived here called to wish them well, and to say good-bye. Everything was packed in boxes and barrels, labeled in Mom's fine handwriting to Coulee Hill, Saskatchewan, somewhere along the Canadian Pacific Railroad, better known as the C.P.R. Tickets had been purchased on the day coach for Mom and the girls. Pop was going on the freight train, with the stock and household effects. Mama Kitty and her family had a new home with neighbors, but Trusty was going along, and he acted like a dog who had lost all sense. Faith, and he must have been Irish too, regardless of his proud Scotch descent, if one were to judge by his crazy antics.

The girls could hardly contain themselves—they were that excited about the long train-ride—but Mom was dreading the

trip. There was a worried frown on her brow as she tried to remember if everything was done. Pop drove up to the door to bid them good-bye . . . until they met again in Saskatchewan. Several of the neighborhood men were with him, to help drive the stock and loaded wagons. One of them waited with a buggy and team, so he could drive Mom and the girls into town.

This was the very first time they had been separated, and Mom and the girls cried, much to Pop's distress, for he was darn near crying himself. But the good-byes were finally over, and Pop left. Mom and the neighbor picked up the suitcases, and the big, wicker basket in which they would carry their lunch on the train, called to the girls to climb in, and the Manns were on their way to Canada. However, Mom and the girls were staying an extra day or two in town with friends, in order to give Pop a head start, so that he would be on hand to meet them when they arrived.

Pat sat in the caboose of the freight train, pulled on his pipe, and exchanged pleasantries with some of the other men. A few were moving to Canada, too. One man came all the way from Texas, and was going out to Alberta. Pat thought that he would find things very different, coming from so far south, and going so far north. The Texan had four carloads of good beef-cattle with him, which he said he planned to put on the ranges. Had bought himself twelve hundred and eighty acres, two full sections! Pat wished him luck, but rather envied him the money he apparently had behind him, to own so much stock and to be able to buy a place instead of renting it. But he didn't feel too downhearted, for the other man was much older, and didn't look too well. Pat felt he was much better off, with his handful of stock and equipment, because he was younger and still full of vim and vigor. He settled back, and let his mind wander to the place which awaited his arrival. He imagined there would be all sorts of things to do, for usually when one rented a place everything was found to be greatly in need of repair, and Pat simply could not tolerate sagging doors, broken windowpanes, or loose boards in any of his barns or outbuildings.

"Mom, I'm hungry!" Margie said, as she tried to attract Mary's attention.

Mom and the girls were on the train, which was laboring along as if it would never get there. The coach was full of tired, mussed-looking people. At least half of them were children, some sleeping, some crying, a few sitting in the dirty aisle, playing. The coach was bitter cold, for the old rusty stove at one end of the car didn't begin to heat it all. Everyone was wrapped up in a coat or blanket. Even Mom, who always looked as if she had just stepped out of a sandbox, had a tired, worried expression on her face. The children looked so messy, and she wondered why she hadn't dressed them in their wool dresses; at least they would have been warmer, and they wouldn't have wrinkled so badly as the starched ones had. How could it be so cold, when there was no snow yet? Where was Pat, and was he managing all right? "What did you say, Margie? Hungry? You are always hungry, it seems; you are going to grow up into a big, fat lady, if you don't watch out!" She smiled at her as she opened the big basket and handed each of the children a piece of fried chicken, which was becoming slightly soggy from being wrapped up so long. She gave them bread and butter to go with it.

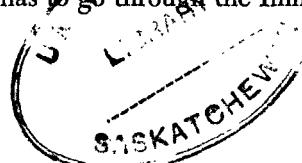
The conductor walked by just then, and Mary asked, "Is there any way we can get milk for the children? I'm sure those crying infants are in need of it, too."

In a disinterested voice, he replied, "Can't get milk till we get to Pine Grove, up the line. It'll be almost seven tonight before we reach there."

"Well, thank you, but will you please let me know when we get near there, so I can buy some for the children? They haven't had milk since we left." She turned on her most charming smile, and tried to impress her request upon his mind.

The following morning the tired old train came to a halt, and there seemed to be excitement everywhere. Mary looked around, and wondered what was happening. Of a passing porter she asked, "What is wrong? Have we broken down or something?"

"No, ma'am, just the line. You has to go through the Immigration Authorities here."



Only one word filtered into her mind and lodged there. "Authorities!" she exclaimed. "What do you mean? Has someone done something they weren't supposed to?"

He chuckled, and said, "Oh no, ma'am! Just when you pass into Canada, you has to pass through the Immigration Authorities," and he walked on down the aisle to answer others' questions.

She asked herself, Why didn't Pat tell me this? What in the world will they want? Maybe they won't let us pass, then what? With Pat already there . . . Aloud she said, "Girls! Here, sit up! Let me comb your hair, Betty; now you run and wash, then come back and take Margie." Gently she shook Margie, and said, "Margie! Wake up sweet, and let Mom try and make you look presentable, for you really look like a poor orphan child." Betty stood waiting by now, so Mom suggested to Margie, "Run along with your sister, and let her help you wash your hands and face. Betty! Stop pushing! Remember she is smaller than you!"

Up at the other end of the coach were two official-looking gentlemen who asked sharp questions and then went through every suitcase. Mary wondered what they were looking for. The girls returned, and looked a bit better. They took their seats again, but Betty kept jiggling around as if she were sitting on a bee. Mom looked at her, then sternly asked, "Betty! What is the matter with you?"

"I have to go, Mom!"

"Heavenly day! You two will be the death of me yet! Go this instant, and take Margie with you! And you can be sure, if we weren't on this train, and in front of all these people, I'd give you a darn good tanning."

Betty yanked Margie by the hand, and they disappeared at the far end of the car. They soon returned, and took their seats like two meek mice, for Mom's face was still stern.

The two officials finally stood at Mary's seat, and one asked, "May we see your papers? Also your ticket showing your destination, and open your bags for inspection!"

Mary was shaking all over, but managed to make her voice sound calm as she asked, "What papers?"

"Your marriage license, or some paper of identity," the same one informed her, then inquired, "Where is your husband? And are these your children?"

Mary felt put upon to be asked such questions, so rather haughtily answered, "I am Mrs. Patrick Mann, and my marriage license is somewhere in those bags! These certainly are my children! Elizabeth, age eleven, and Margaret, age eight years. My husband has gone on ahead, to Coulee Hill, Saskatchewan, to be ready for us when we arrive; he took the stock and equipment by freight."

"Are you an American or a Canadian citizen? Do you plan to live in Canada permanently?" he then asked.

By this time Mary had found the marriage license, and the other official was going through the bags, turning everything upside down. She wished he would be more careful, as her few precious pieces of china were in there. However, she turned and handed the marriage certificate to the one waiting for it, and replied, "We are American citizens, at least I think so. My husband was born in Canada, but I believe his father became a naturalized American citizen when he moved to the States. I was born in the States, and so were both children, and we do plan to make our home in Saskatchewan."

The tickets and marriage license were thoroughly inspected, and the officials seemed satisfied. They thanked her, and moved on down the coach, finally disappearing through the door. There was more waiting, and everyone, the children included, was getting restless, but finally the engine started to tremble and chug, then jerked them here and there as it hooked onto their coach, and once again they were on their way.

As it passed the borderline, and on into Canada, Mary remarked to the children, "Well, my dears, we are now in Canada; this particular part is known as the province of Manitoba."

"But when will we be in Saskatchewan?" Betty inquired.

"Pop explained to me that there were three provinces, known as the 'Prairie Provinces.' First there is Manitoba, which we are now in, then comes Saskatchewan, where we will live, and west of it is the province of Alberta. These three provinces are famous

for their tremendous wheatfields. I imagine it will be several hours before we get to Saskatchewan," she said in answer to Betty's question.

They did ride for several hours before the train passed the borderline into Saskatchewan. The scenery had changed, too; now there were small, rolling hills, and the trees seemed to be in round clumps in the fields—bluffs, the people of Saskatchewan called them.

Toward midafternoon, the conductor passed through the coach and called such names as "Indian Head," "Qu'Appelle," "McLean," and some other names which Mary could not distinguish, but then she heard the name Regina, very clearly at the end.

She sat up quickly and exclaimed, "Regina! Did you hear that, girls? The conductor just said Regina." As he passed by on his return down the coach she asked, "How long before we shall reach Regina?"

"It will be about an hour and a half, lady," he replied.

She turned back to the girls and remarked, "Well, in another couple of hours or so we shall see Pop; he told me Coulee Hill came shortly after we passed through Regina."

She turned her glance out the window, and wondered what had happened to the landscape. Oh, yes, the trees were all gone, and her eyes traveled far, far over the horizon. Nothing blocked the view except big, white houses and mammoth red barns. At least the people seemed well-to-do, if their buildings were a fair indication. She started to get excited, and visioned herself in a large, white house—for the moment she had forgotten Pat's explanation of the four small rooms.

The girls chattered like two magpies, beside themselves with joy as they realized Pop was so close. A few days ago it had seemed they would never see him again.

The train pulled into Regina, and most of the people were ready to get off. There was a great deal of excitement; many hellos with laughs, some with tears, as families were united. Mary could hardly contain herself as she waited for the train to get started again, and take them all to Pat.

Meanwhile, Pat stood at a small, yellow station, and looked east down the track for the first sign of smoke, as he would be able to see it long before the train came into view. The station agent stood watching him, then finally asked, "Expecting someone?"

"'Someone' is right!" Pat answered. "None other than my wife and two beautiful daughters. You should see the three of them, they're enough to make a man's heart do funny tricks."

"How long since you've seen them?" the agent then asked.

"Oh, about a week, or a little more, I guess. You see, I came on with the stock and household effects, in order to get things a bit settled for them before they arrived. My name is Patrick Mann—may I ask yours?"

"Struthers is the name, and I've been here in this spot for the past twelve years."

Pat walked up and shook his hand, and said, "Glad to meet you, Struthers! But look, isn't that the smoke of the train now?"

"Yes, that's her—she's due in a few minutes now."

And sure enough the train was drawing closer, the smoke from her smokestack curling away in the sky. Finally she came to a stop, with much hissing, sputtering, and groaning, but Pat, who usually was so interested in engines, had eyes for nothing but the first glimpse of his family. There! Flying down the steps like a small cyclone was Betty, and right on her heels was Margie "Pop! Pop!" they both yelled at the top of their lungs, then landed on him like an avalanche, completely enveloping him in arms and legs, and smothering him with kisses. He released himself gently from their twining arms, and asked, "Where is your Mom?" Just then the porter emerged under a welter of bags and clothing, and right behind him was Mary. The minute her feet touched the ground, Pat swung her into his arms. "Mary! Oh darlin', but it's good to see you, and most important to feel you here in my arms again. Ye gods, how I've missed the three of you!"

Mary's eyes spied the station agent as he watched them with a grin on his face from ear to ear. She gently shoved at Pat and whispered, "Yes, darling, it's sure good to see you too, but let's

not make too public an exhibition of ourselves, for the agent seems to be watching us as if we were strange animals or something."

"The devil take the man! He'll get used to the sight of us, as we will live only two miles from here, and this is where we will do our buying, except when we go into the City. However, you had better come over and meet him." Keeping one arm around Mary's waist, he walked toward the agent and said, "Mr. Struthers, I want you to meet my wife, Mrs. Mann—and these are my two daughters," as he presented them also.

"How do you do! All of you welcome to Saskatchewan, and especially to Coulee Hill, a small but mighty place."

"How do you do, Mr. Struthers," Mary replied, "and thank you for your warm welcome. You know you are my first Canadian acquaintance, so you will always hold an extra-special spot in my thoughts." Then she turned to Pat and suggested, "Now, dear, we must get these bags and other things loaded and out of Mr. Struthers's way. Do you have the team close?"

"Right over there," and he pointed to where the team was tied. "I didn't bring the surrey—brought the democrat instead, as I was afraid there wouldn't be room for all of us and the bags, too. You don't mind, do you, Mary?"

"No, I don't mind, but it would have been nice to make our first tour through town in the surrey, for if I'm not mistaken I can see several curious faces at the windows."

"Oh, bother the people!" Pat retorted.

"Not so fast, my Irishman! Don't you forget this is where our home is to be, and first impressions are lasting impressions."

"Right you are, my dear!" With that he started to cart the things to the rig, then called over his shoulder, "We'll load and make as grand an appearance as we possibly can."

Mary laughed to herself, and called to the girls to come and help. Everything loaded, they started on their way. Soon they had passed through the small village and out onto the road. The road was dusty, and the dust seemed to be settling on everything. Such black dust, too! It would never wash out of their clothes. Aloud Mary asked, "Pat, what makes this dust so black?"

"Black dust? Oh, that is really black gold," he laughed, then added, "It's what makes this land what it is. It's what grows the golden wheat." Just then he pointed ahead, and asked, "See that big barn over there? That's where home is. I've gotten things a little settled, Mary; the stove up, and table and chairs in. The beds are up, too, but I couldn't find the bedding. You sure hid it well when you packed, didn't you? Lucky I had my blankets I used on the train, or I'd sure have been out of luck."

Mary smiled, then said, "I'm glad you got some of the things set up, anyway; it won't take long to make up the beds, and everything for them is in that large wooden packing-box."

As they drove into the yard, a big yellow-and-white bundle of fur bounded toward them. "Oh, Trusty! Hello! Hello there!" screamed both girls. The dog was beside himself with glee as he recognized his two playmates.

Mary's eyes roved this way and that, and finally she asked, "Wherever is the house, Pat?"

"Right here!" he said as he drew up the team, then jumped down in front of a small, two-story, unpainted building.

She'd been prepared for something unpretentious, but nothing like what met her gaze. A sharp reply readied itself, but she thought better of it. Just then she discovered most of her good chairs and tables standing in the yard. "Pat! Whatever made you leave my good furniture in the yard? What if it had rained or snowed? All of it would have been ruined!"

He grinned and looked sheepish, then said, "Well it didn't, dear; but the truth of the matter is I couldn't find room for it in the house. You can probably arrange it better, and squeeze it in." He thought, This is a good time to put the team away, and let her cool off. Aloud he said, "I'm off to put the team away, Mary, and I have a few things to do out there. Won't be long!"

The girls were already investigating the four small rooms. Mary followed them in silence, but finally Betty spoke up and said, "Golly! It's kinda small, isn't it?"

"Kind of small," Mom corrected. "Yes it is small, girls, but Pop's heart is set on it, so we'll not say anything, except that it is fine." That was okay with them, they agreed.

Mary put her disappointment away—also the picture of the

big, white house—and started to unpack dishes and cooking-utensils, preparatory to making some sort of meal for them. Pat appeared shortly afterward, and as he entered the doorway Mary calmly asked, "Pat, dear, will you open that large wooden box, so we can find the bedding?"

His heart settled back in place, and began to beat normally again, and he thought, What a woman! I know she is terribly disappointed, but you would never be able to tell by looking at her now. No wonder I love her so much!

After many efforts the cookstove drew enough so that supper could be cooked upon it, but it smoked badly, and Mary said, "Pat, the first thing you must do in the morning is try and fix this stove. It's perhaps full-up with ashes." He agreed that that was more than likely what was ailing the thing.

Supper was finally on the table, and even though it wasn't much of a meal it was eaten with great relish, and really seemed a banquet, for it was home-cooked, and they were all together again to enjoy it. When they had finished, Mary told the girls to do up the dishes, and she would do the pots and pans when she and Pat finished making the beds.

They carried the blankets and pillows upstairs, and were soon through with the beds. As they stood in the middle of their bedroom, Mary noticed that there was scarcely room for Pat to straighten up, even there in the center of the room, and he had already bumped himself several times on the sloping sides. He reached for her and folded her tight in his arms, and with lips pressed to her ear he murmured, "My very own sweet one!" She could feel his heart beating like a triphammer, and she relaxed against him, feeling and loving the safety of his arms. Finally she pushed him back, laughed breathlessly, and exclaimed, "Pat Mann! For shame! You'd think you were courting me, making my heart do flip-flops, instead of being my husband these twelve years, and the father of two big girls!"

"Husband, father, or whatever I am be danged!" he answered briskly. "You'll always be my sweetheart, and you do terrible things to this old heart of mine, too."

"Yes, dear, I know," she replied softly. "You will always be my very best beau, and between the two of us, I like it very

much, but at the moment we have two daughters waiting downstairs, so I think we had better go on down."

He gave her a final squeeze and threatened, "You aren't through with me yet, woman!"

She threw him a promise with her eyes as she preceded him down the stairway. As they came into the sitting-room, Pat asked, "How about a stroll outside, to the barn and so on, for a check-over there?"

"I'll be with you in a few minutes," Mary answered, and went on into the kitchen to finish up the pots and pans, as she had promised the girls. Soon she was through, and they all left the house together. It was just sundown, and Mary had never seen such a sunset. All red and gold, overcast with mauve. She stood against Pat's arm and admired it. "I think dear, that is the most beautiful sunset I have ever seen. Why does it seem so much more beautiful than usual?"

"Maybe it's 'specially for us," he answered, then went on to say, "but truthfully I think it is because there is nothing to hide it in any way . . . no hills, or trees to break it up."

She sighed and said, "I'm going to miss the trees something terrible, but maybe these beautiful sunsets will help make up for them."

Everything was fine in the barn; and it certainly was a beautiful structure. Mary wondered why the builders couldn't have stretched their imaginations a little more on the house. Looking around, she saw several smaller buildings, and oh!—such a very high windmill. She asked Pat the reason for it being all the way up there.

"Well, they tell me, in the wintertime when it is real cold there are times when there isn't a breath of wind stirring, except higher up, so that is why they are built so tall, otherwise one would have to pump water by hand for the stock. Personally I don't really know, except what they tell me."

"Sounds logical enough," she said, then, noticing Betty taking it all in, she cautioned, "Don't either of you two ever get the notion to climb up there. It's entirely too high for either of you," but to herself she thought, If Betty doesn't, I'll miss my guess. . . .

Several days passed, and some semblance of living began to show in the small house. Everyone worked hard, so they all were ready to retire early. It seemed to Pat that he had been asleep for hours, when he suddenly woke and saw Mary on the far side of the room. He asked, "In Heaven's name, what are you doing Mary? Prowling around with that lamp! Here it is in the middle of the night, and you must be tired; why aren't you sleeping? Whatever are you doing over in that corner?"

She answered in a whisper, so not to wake the girls, "I knew it, Pat! I just had a feeling from the very first moment!"

"You knew what?" he asked rather brusquely, impatient to go back to sleep.

"Bedbugs, Pat! The place is alive with bedbugs! Creeping out of every crack! You'd think the cold weather would kill them, but no, there they are, ready to devour us. The children will be eaten up by the things. What a terrible place! Tomorrow everything will have to come out again, and the entire place fumigated. I could cry Pat; just when I'd gotten everything fairly settled."

"My poor dear! I'm so sorry," he told her, then coaxed, "But darlin', please come back to bed, and tomorrow I'll give you a hand, and between us we'll rid the place once and for all."

Reluctantly she blew out the lamp, and crawled into his waiting arms. She felt him scratching at himself, as if the bed were already infested, and her Irish disposition came to the fore again; she started to giggle, then told him, "I can stand even bedbugs, as long as I have you. As usual my mountains are just molehills, and not worth all the worry."

Pat mumbled something about, "What a woman!" then he was off to sleep again.

There were days and days of hard work again, but Mary finally decided that the place was free of bedbugs, and there was order once again in the four small rooms. There had not been room enough for all the furniture, so what had been left over was carefully wrapped and Pat hung it neatly around the hay-mow walls. Mary hoped with all her heart that the rats and mice would be contented with the hay and grain in the mow, and would not make too many nests in the furniture.

The second Monday morning since their arrival! Such a commotion as there had been! Lunches to be packed and both girls to be dressed in their best, as this was their first day at school. An hour or so had passed since they had left, and now Mary wondered how they were making out. She could remember new schools in her own childhood, and how miserable new pupils could be made to feel. They must take the brunt of things until they established themselves, and made their own little clique of friends.

In the one-story, frame schoolhouse, class had just been called to order. The children all arose and sang *God Save the King*. Betty and Margie did not know the words, but the tune was the same as for *America*, so the two girls just hummed.

Betty had been given a seat near the back of the school, in the middle aisle. Margie was nearer the front with the smaller children. When they were all seated again after the song, Miss Johnson introduced the two girls to the rest of the pupils. Betty glanced around and found all the youngsters staring at her, and the big boys in the double seats on the far side sniggered and giggled. She felt the blood rush to her face, and she wondered if they were laughing at them. The teacher noticed her embarrassment, and she spoke sharply to the boys. When the room quieted, she turned to Betty and asked, "What grades are you and Margie in?"

She stood to answer, then said, "Margie is ready for grade four, and I'm ready to be passed into the seventh." The teacher thanked her, then assigned each some work. When she came to Betty's desk she said, "I'll make a list of the books you girls will need, also the name of the place to purchase them. You stop by my desk before you go home and pick it up."

"Yes, I will," Betty replied, "and thank you," she added as an afterthought, for she had been so nervous that she had almost forgotten her manners.

During recess and the lunch hour, some of the older girls talked to Betty. They asked her all kinds of questions about the States, as if it were a foreign land. She tried to explain, but when she saw their unfriendly faces, she retorted, "It's none of your

Then a chorus went up from the other children, "Foreigner! Foreigner! Go on back—Yankee! Yankee!" The teacher heard the disturbance, so she came to the rescue, and asked the children to apologize to the girls. They did so reluctantly, but left the two children entirely alone afterward.

The new books ordered from Regina arrived a few days later, and Betty was excited about them until she started to leaf through them, when to her dismay she found she did not understand them at all. On Friday Miss Johnson asked her to remain after school. When the other children had all gone out of the schoolroom, she said, "Betty, I'm afraid I have bad news for you girls. Our grades seem to be different here, or something, and I am going to have to put you back to grade five, and Margie back to grade two. I know this is going to be very hard for you to take, but it must be done, my dear, in order that you get the foundation necessary for the higher grades. Try not to worry about it too much, as I am sure it will work out fine. Will you please tell your parents I'll stop by some time this weekend to explain it to them?" Seeing the stricken look on Betty's face, she tried to assure her it would work itself out in no time at all. Finally she told her good-bye, and said she would see her Monday morning.

"Good-bye," Betty mumbled as she went out the door; she told Margie to come along, and they started for home.

"What did teacher want?" Margie asked. "Did you catch it?"

"No I didn't catch it—it's much worse than that." Then she tried to explain to Margie what teacher had said. Margie tried to comprehend, but it was over her head, so she just skipped along the road, swinging her dinner pail. She called back to Betty, "Come on! Let's hurry home and tell Mom, and she'll soon fix that old teacher."

Betty did not answer, for she wondered what Mom would say, as she knew Mom had been proud that she was ready for grade seven. She'd often heard Mom say to her friends, "Betty is doing so well in school for her age. Do you know she is ready for grade seven, and I think that is really good." The friends had

always agreed that they thought this was exceptionally good.

When the girls arrived home, they were no sooner in the door than Margie was clamoring for bread and jam. Mom fixed a slice for each one, but all the while she watched Betty, for she knew something was bothering her. However, she waited for her to bring the subject up in her own way. Margie took her bread and jam and flew out the door to play. Mom called her back, then asked, "What did you forget to do, young lady?"

"What, Mom?" she asked, her face filled with innocence.

"You know you can't go out to play in your good school-dress," Betty retorted, before Mom had a chance to say anything, so reluctantly Margie clumped off upstairs to change.

Betty sat nibbling at her bread and jam, and finally Mom couldn't stand it any longer, so she asked, "What is the matter, Betty? You have a face a mile long. Is something worrying you?"

With that Betty started to cry, then blurted out, "Oh Mom, teacher put us both back in school! I can't ever go there again, as the kids will laugh and make fun more than ever. I just can't go back ever, that's all!"

Mom sat down, and pulled her onto her lap, and said, "There, there, darling! Don't cry any more." When she was quieter, Mom said, "Now tell me exactly what the teacher said."

"She said the grades are farther advanced here, and some subjects different, and we must be put back. I'm to be in grade five, and Margie in grade two. Isn't that awful? She also said to tell you she would stop by some time this weekend, to explain it to you and Pop."

"All right, dear, you just dry your tears, and run along now to change your dress. Pop and I will talk to teacher, and I'm sure we will come to some understanding about it all," Mom assured her.

Betty slowly climbed the stairs. Thoughts strummed through her head: All the kids at school will think we're dummies for sure, now. Maybe we are too, to be so stupid and far behind!

Meanwhile thoughts tumbled over in Mary's mind too: Poor

darling, one of her first problems. It seems so big to her, but there will be many of them before she is much older. I do hope we have trained her to be ready to meet them.

The teacher stopped by Sunday morning, on her way to church, and explained to Mom and Pop about how classes were graded in Canada. They could understand after all, she said, that the schools apparently used only the most essential subjects; also that each grade seemed to cover a larger scope than the same grades had in the States. Mom promised the teacher that they would help at home as much as possible, especially with Betty, as it meant more to her than Margie, who was too young to understand. Miss Johnson promised that if Betty studied hard she could perhaps take six months for grade five, and six months for grade six, and that way her demotion would be made up in one year. She said she would help all she could, if Betty cooperated by taking a heavy schedule of homework. Mom promised that she would, so Miss Johnson had bid them good-bye and left.

After she was gone, Pat looked at Mary questioningly. Finally Mary said, "She seemed a nice, sincere person. I was ready to hate her on Betty's account, but now I can see her viewpoint."

"She seemed awful prim and proper to me, with her clipped, fast talking," he suggested.

"Now Pat, that is not so. Haven't you noticed everyone speaks more quickly here, and especially I've been aware of the completion of words, no slurring of letters, and leaving some off completely."

"Personally I think we speak pretty good English," he answered, "you do anyway, more so than I do."

"Well, darling, we are now in a country where the old expression, 'The King's English well spoken,' is really practiced. I'm sure it won't hurt any of us to be more careful of our speech."

During recess the following Monday, Betty saw a group of girls standing together on one side of the yard. They talked and giggled, as if they had a huge joke. She walked over to join them, then asked, "What are you doing?"

The girls looked at one another, then laughed some more. Finally one of them remarked, "Esha oesn'tda owkna esha isa ana ummydal! (She doesn't know she is a dummy!)"

Betty looked from one to the other, then asked, "What kind of language was that?"

"It's Pig-Latin. Didn't you understand it?" one girl asked her.

"No I didn't, but will you teach me?" she eagerly questioned.

"Try and find out! Try and find out!" they chorused, and all trooped away and left her standing alone. She walked slowly to one of the swings, sat in it, and pushed herself back and forth, all the while she watched the rest of them at play, and wished with all her heart that someone would come and ask her to join them. Margie seemed to be doing better, for she played contentedly with the smaller children.

That evening while Betty was drying dishes, she asked, "Mom, do you know how to talk Pig-Latin?"

Mom laughed and said, "Well, it's been years since I tried, but here goes! Cangus yougus talkgus Pigus Latinus? (Can you talk Pig-Latin?)"

"Oh, no, Mom! That isn't right! That isn't how it sounded at all!"

"Then I just don't know the same kind. I understand there are several," she replied, "but you listen carefully to one or two words, and we'll try and work it out. Maybe one of the girls will tell you how before too long. Is that all right?" Betty agreed that would be fine.

Three unhappy weeks went by, then one evening as the girls were leaving the schoolyard to go home, someone asked, "Want me to help carry your books, Betty?"

Cautious after the treatment she had been receiving, she answered rather stiffly, "Thank you, Harry, but they aren't heavy, so I can manage."

"Well, then, can my sisters and I walk home with you and Margie? We go the same way you do, at least till we get to the big pasture."

"Oh! That will be fine!" Betty exclaimed, as she eagerly accepted the offer of friendship; so the three youngsters fell into step with her and Margie. Harry, the boy, was thirteen; Lucille,

the older sister, was twelve; and Bunty, the little one, was eight.

There was silence for a while, then Harry asked, "How do you girls like going to our school?"

"We like the school part just fine, but the kids haven't been very friendly," Betty answered for both of them.

"That's what Harry and I thought," Lucille offered.

"What do you mean, Harry and I? If I remember correctly, this very morning I told you and Bunty that all of you girls were acting like a bunch of heels," Harry retorted.

Reluctantly Lucille admitted, "Yes, Harry is right, but Mother asked us to invite you both to our house this Saturday afternoon. Do you think you can come?" Then, seeing the hesitation on Betty's face, she added, "I'm sorry we were so mean to you both, and I'll try to make up for it."

"Oh that's all right!" Betty assured her, tickled to be treated in a friendly way again. "I'll ask Mom about Saturday, and let you know tomorrow."

That problem settled between them, they walked the rest of the way, and chatted about this and that school happening. Finally Harry said, "Well here's where we leave you. See you tomorrow, eh? Good-bye now!"

"G'bye!" both girls answered, as they stooped down to crawl under the three strands of barbed-wire fence. They had found that this way was a shortcut home.

"Golly! They're real nice, aren't they?" Betty asked.

"Yeh! I liked 'em too!" Margie told her.

"Don't say 'em, Margie! You know what Mom said—we are not to slur letters off words. The word is them, not 'em," Betty prompted.

"Oh, don't be so bossy! Just 'cause you're bigger, don't mean you can be bossing all the time," Margie retorted and, flipping the tail of her dress, she pranced on ahead, then called over her shoulder, "I'm sure going to tell Mom, how you're always trying to boss me around! She'll fix you, you wait and see!"

"Oh, shut up, Margie! Guess you'll always be a tattletale!" Betty replied, very uppity-uppity, hoping that the word tattletale would keep Margie quiet.

"I am not!" she screamed, and ran on ahead toward home.

Mary watched the five children as they came down the road, and she thought to herself, Now everything will be better. Once they start to make friends, everything will be easier for them.

The girls' near-argument was quickly forgotten, and as soon as they burst in the door they started giving a detailed account of every word spoken with their new friends. Betty asked about them going to visit Lucille and Bunty on Saturday. Mom assured her she would speak to Pop about it, and let them know in the morning.

Snow had been falling, off and on, for the past three weeks, and again today it was dark and dreary. Everything had a gray look, and it seemed warmer than it had been. Mary wondered if it was going to rain, but no, there were the first flakes of snow again, so large that they looked like great white feathers as they tumbled down. As she watched it she thought: How clean it all looks, covering all the dirty patches where the earlier snow has melted, or where dirt has settled; filling in all the paths and footprints, it makes a complete, white, down-comforter over it all. The barn has a white roof now, making the rest of it seem more red. She decided that this was a good day to get some mending done; it had been stacking up ever since they had arrived. She looked over several of the girls' wash dresses, and discovered tears in the hems of most of them. She wondered how they could all be torn in the same place. As she sat mending one, it suddenly occurred to her that Trusty was the one to blame, as he was always romping and tumbling the girls, and pulling at their clothes.

A couple of hours elapsed, and Mary suddenly sensed a change in the weather. The house felt colder, and the wind seemed to be blowing harder. Looking out the window, she discovered it had stopped snowing, and the wind was picking up the new snow, swirling it around until the air was becoming thick with it. She glanced at the clock, saw it was two o'clock, and wished the children were home from school; especially she

wished that they had warmer clothing with them. Then a great gust of wind came, which felt as if it would lift the small house from its foundation. She rushed back to the window, and now the air was dense with flying snow. Could this be a blizzard? Surely not, for certainly it would give more warning than this. But she decided to go out and see what Pat thought of it.

She dressed herself warmly in a greatcoat, overshoes, scarf, and mittens, opened the door, and made her way to the granary where Pat had been all day, busy fanning grain. The wind seeped through her clothes immediately, and the flying snow was like sharp pieces of glass as it beat at her face.

She tugged the granary door open, looked in, and saw Pat busily shoveling grain away from the fanning mill. He looked up and gave her a grin. "Did you come out to give your old man a hand?" he yelled.

She tried to make herself heard above the noise, and hollered back at him, "Pat! There's a terrible storm coming!"

He couldn't hear what she said, so he stopped the machine, then asked, "What did you say, Mary?"

"There's a terrible storm coming up, Pat," she told him again, "and I'm worried about the children getting home from school."

Pat could hear the wind as it tore at the granary. He hadn't noticed it before, as the machinery was making too much noise; also the granary's one window was too high to see out of. Pushing the door open, he looked out and was surprised to see the air full of swirling snow. Already it had started to stack up against the north sides of the buildings.

"You'll have to take a team and go for the girls, as they will never be able to walk in this," Mary advised, then added, "Look! You can scarcely see the house from here."

Pat agreed that the kids could never walk in such a storm, and said he would leave right away for them. As he turned from closing the granary door, he noticed an object coming toward them from the road. It drew nearer and he made out a team and sleigh, which stopped at the house. They went toward the house to see who it was.

A man's voice hollered, "Hello therel Anyone home?"

"Hello to you!" Pat called in answer. "Anything we can do for you?"

"I'm Tate, your neighbor, and I'm going to school to pick up my kids, and the others coming this way. You won't need to go for yours, as I'll bring them along home." Pat attempted to thank him, but the wind whipped his words away into space. Then Tate continued, "A real oldtimer blowing up, it seems. You folks ever experience a real Canadian blizzard before?"

"Not that I remember, anyway," Pat answered. "I was pretty young when my dad moved to the States from eastern Canada."

"Well, be sure your stock's all in, with plenty of feed and water. While you can still see, you better stretch a line of some kind between the barn and house, so you won't get lost after it gets dark." Seeing a look of incredulity on Pat's face, he added, "That can really happen, you know. Well, I'll be on my way, and I'll be back as soon as I can make it. By the way, do you have a couple more robes I can take along, to cover the kids with?"

"If you'll wait a minute, I'll be right back with them," Mary offered, and she went into the house. She gathered up some more warm clothing, and two wool blankets. As she handed them to Mr. Tate, she asked him please to be careful.

He assured her he would, then looked at the blankets and said, "Don't you have any fur robes?"

"No, we don't," Pat answered for Mary.

"Well, these will do, but you really should order yourselves some fur ones, from the Eaton catalogue, as they are the only things that will keep the cold out in this country. Then if you lose any stock, have the hides tanned and made into robes. Well, I'll see you later!" He picked up the lines, gave them a shake, and he and team disappeared into the storm.

Mary looked at Pat, with a worried expression on her face. "What kind of a country is this? It's more like what you read about in books!"

"Yes, dear, it's pretty startling, isn't it? You go on in the house, and I'll get started feeding and watering the stock."

"I'll come with you, and give a hand; I couldn't possibly sit

in the house doing nothing, and I won't feel easy until the girls are home," she answered.

Pat put his arm through hers, to help her face the snow and wind. Once they were inside the barn it was nice and warm. Much warmer than that awful house, Mary thought. They tried to make the stock go to the well to drink, but they wouldn't budge over the doorway. Finally they led the horses there and back, but the cattle were stubborn, and would not be led, so Pat carried it by pailfuls for them. As Mary held a pail for one cow to drink, she remarked, "I never realized how much water a cow could stow away at one drinking, until this minute." Then, as an afterthought, she asked, "What are you going to use for a line from here to the house?"

"Oh, that's the bunk! Whoever heard of not being able to find your own house or barn, when they are so close together in one yard? Tate was pulling my leg, I think."

"It seemed pretty farfetched to me too," she answered from the far end of the barn, where she had gone to look after the calves.

"Think you can manage it up to the house for the milk pails?" Pat hollered to her. "We should get the milking over early tonight, I think, then we won't have to come out in the storm later. While you're up there, I'll go on over and take care of the chickens and hogs."

She came back to the front of the barn, and said, "Yes, I'll get the pails. While you're over at the chickenhouse, look and see if there are any eggs. Those darn hens sure seem to be on a strike. I've wondered if I shouldn't have gone to a regular poultry-house in the City for them, instead of getting them locally."

"It isn't likely they'll lay any eggs until they thaw out in the spring," he said, "but I'll look, anyway."

Mary pulled the barn door open and looked out. She saw that it was getting dark already, and the house was just a blur in the distance. She decided that she had better get started, and stumbled through the drifts which were already piling up between the barn and house. She was panting as though after a hard run when she finally reached the house. She dropped into a chair to rest, for she felt she just had to catch her breath for

a minute. Suddenly she was sure she could hear a sleigh. Yes! There were the children's voices now. She rushed to the door, opened it, and two very cold youngsters stumbled in. "Thank you so much, Mr. Tate! We'll return the favor next storm," she called.

"That's okay!" he hollered back, then added, "Don't send the kids to school until the storm is completely over, and the roads are cleared. It may take several days."

She thanked him again, then closed the door. Quickly she added more coal to the fire, then turned to help the girls get their coats off. Looking at Margie's face, she suddenly asked, "Whatever are those white spots on your face?"

Betty looked too, then snapped, "I told you to keep your face covered, like teacher and Mr. Tate said. It's frostbite, Mom; get some snow and put it on it. That's what teacher said to do."

"Snow?" she exclaimed. "Won't that freeze it more?"

"No it won't Mom, it will draw it out instead," Betty assured her.

"Oh, dear God! What next?" Mary asked, as she went out the door to get a handful of snow, returned, and put it on the white spots. "Please stand still, Margie! I can't follow you all over the kitchen."

"But Mom, it hurts something awful!" Margie whimpered.

"Yes, I'm sure it stings, but do stop crying! It will be better in a minute," Mom pleaded with her.

"I think I must have nipped my feet, the way they feel," Betty said as she jumped up and down trying to warm them.

"Why don't you get a chair, and put them on the oven door?" Mom asked. "That'll warm them up in a jiffy."

"Gosh, Mom! You don't know much about cold countries, do you? We had a lesson on that, right at the beginning of the cold weather, and teacher explained that if you put heat on frostbitten feet you will have chilblains."

Mom laughed, then said, "Now you will have to explain—what are chilblains?"

"Teacher said your feet get very sore; but that isn't all, for along with the soreness they itch like everything."

"Well, that would be very uncomfortable, I'm sure," Mom

agreed, then she added, "I guess everything is under control here now, so I'm taking the milk pails and going out to help Pop. When you get warm Betty, you set the table, and put the kettle on for tea. You won't have to go out again tonight, as Pop and I'll manage your chores for you."

Mary dreaded going out into the storm again, but Pat would be wondering what had become of her—she had been gone such a long time. Just as she picked up the pails to leave, Pat burst into the room, looking like a real snowman. There was frost and snow hanging on him from head to foot—even his lashes and brows were covered—and he looked almost frozen stiff.

"Hi, Pop!" Betty welcomed him. "How do you like this for a storm? Gee! You look like a real honest-to-goodness snowman!"

"Hi, yourselves!" he greeted them, as he stomped around the kitchen trying to get warmed up. "Ye gods, but it's awful out! Can you believe it, Mary, I got lost in my own yard! When you were gone so long, I decided to come for the pails myself, so I stumbled around for quite a while . . . thought I was here, but guess where I was? Over on the far side of the barn! So, believe me, I went back into the barn and got a ball of twine, fastened it to the barn door, then started out very carefully to find the house. I was scared stiff you'd get started back, before I could make it here. We'll have to find something stronger than the twine though, as this wind will make short work of it. Maybe there's enough in that roll of wire in the barn. Let's get going, shall we?"

As soon as they reached the barn, Pat found the wire and fastened it securely at both ends. They proceeded to do up the milking. There was no conversation between them; each was busy in thought. When they were ready to start back to the house, Pat asked, "What about Trusty? Does he rate barn or house tonight?"

"Oh, we'd better bring him along to the house. The girls would start worrying, later on, about his supper and general welfare," she answered.

The wind kept blowing all night. It seemed stronger than ever. The upstairs of the little house was bitter cold; Pat got up

twice to shake up the hard-coal burner. As he started downstairs the second time, Mary asked him to bring up the two flatirons from the back of the stove, and remarked, "I'm sure the two I put in the girls' bed are cold by this time." After she changed the irons she climbed back into bed, and shook as if she had the ague. She cuddled up close to Pat and said, "Lucky me to have picked myself a warm-blooded husband, otherwise I'd freeze in this country. You know it's rather scary; one could actually freeze to death right in his own bed."

"Well, it's certainly something to be thankful for, knowing you won't be kicked out of your bed, because you must be a stove for your wife's comfort," he answered rather sharply.

"Stop being an idiot, at this hour of the morning," Mary snapped back. "Let's get back to sleep, as I'm sure you will have your day cut out for you. From the sound of that wind, the drifts will be a mile high. It will take you half the day to shovel a path to the barn."

"Yes, I didn't like the way it was filling in between the barn and house. There should be some trees on the north side of the yard; that would cut off the drifting here between the buildings."

"But darling, that would cut off some of the view, wouldn't it?" she asked in a teasing voice.

"Now who is being an idiot?" Pat queried. "You know such silly remarks are entirely lost on me."

Mary gave up and snuggled her head on his shoulder. "That's more like my good girl," he said as he folded his arms around her.

By eight the following morning Mary and Pat were both up. It was almost dark outside, as the storm had not abated very much. Pat tried to see from the windows, but they were entirely covered with a thick frost, which was formed into lacy and fernlike patterns, the beauty of which was entirely lost on him—his mind was filled with thoughts of his stock, and the problem of getting to the barn to look after them. He finally opened the door and looked out. A great white bank blocked his vision.

"Ye gods, Mary! Look at the drift!" he exclaimed. "How in the dickens am I going to get to the toolshed for a shovel? Guess

I'll have to keep one here in the house for such emergencies."

"Will you close that door, Pat? The heat from fifty stoves won't melt it down, and no reason why we should stand here and freeze to death in the bargain." However, she offered, "There's that small shovel in the cellar, the one we use to fill the coal hod. Maybe you can manage with it, at least to the toolshed."

Pat went into the cellar, and brought up the shovel in question. He looked at it, with a black frown on his face, then exclaimed, "Might as well start on that bank with a teaspoon, as this danged little thing!"

"Well, don't you start barking at me!" Mary retorted. "You asked for it, for you are the one who must go back to your dear, native Canada, to the wide-open spaces, where there was nothing to get in your way, nothing to block your vision. Well, it strikes me there's something blocking your vision at the moment!" She banged dishes and pans around, and felt very much put upon.

Finally breakfast was on the table, and there was great silence between them, as they sat hating each other. Then suddenly there was a pad of scurrying feet, and two tousleheads burst upon them.

"Mornin', Pop! Mornin', Mom!" both children greeted them at once. "Gosh! Is that upstairs ever cold!" Betty said, and she and Margie dropped their clothes upon the oven door, and almost crawled inside trying to get warm.

"Good morning, kids!" Mary and Pat both answered. Betty then asked, "Is it still blowing so hard, Pop?"

"Yes it is, and a fine mess it is out there! You should see it! Drifts higher than my head!"

"We'll help shovel it, won't we, Margie?" Betty then suggested, but went on to add to Margie, "Although you're pretty little."

"I'm not either little!" Margie retorted. "Teacher said I'm a big girl!"

"You didn't act very big the other day, when you forgot to raise your hand in time, to ask teacher to excuse you, and you had an accident," Betty giggled.

"Oh! You promised you wouldn't tell!" Margie wailed, and tears sprang to her eyes.

"Girls! Girls! Stop, this instant!" Mom ordered. "Now what is this all about? Margie, whatever made you do such a thing?"

"I'm sorry, Mom, but I just couldn't help it. The big boys snigger and make fun, when you ask to be excused, so I put it off too long."

"All right, my dear, but do try and not let that happen again." Then she turned to Betty and said, "I'm ashamed of you, tattling on your sister. You know we don't like tattling, and I don't want to catch you at it again, or I'll just have to give you a good tanning! Hurry now, both of you, and dress and wash up, then come and eat your breakfast."

Mary sat down at the table again. As she glanced at Pat, she caught a gleam in his eye. She giggled under her breath, looked at him, and her lips formed the words, "I'm sorry!" He reached across the table for her hand, and gave it a squeeze. Their near-argument, started earlier, was gone by the wayside, and they could thank the interruption of the children for that. Mary thought: What a blessing children are! Here Pat and I would have been hating one another all day, because each one of us would have been too stubborn to break the silence.

Winter had really come to stay, it seemed. After the blizzard, even though the days were bright and sunny most of the time, it was bitter cold outside. Pat and the girls didn't seem to mind it very much. He and the neighbors were taking turns driving the children to and from school, as it was really too cold for them to walk. He had also taken them to their tea-party last Saturday, with their new friends.

The girls' conversation these days was full of nothing but Christmas, which was not far off. The only thing they seemed interested in were sleds and ice-skates. Neither one could skate, but there had been talk of nothing else since Pat took them to the skating rink one Saturday afternoon while they were in the small village doing the week's shopping.

Mary was beginning to feel the effects of her coming confinement, which was little more than a month away. All arrangements had been made with the village doctor, and she liked him very much. He seemed such a kind and understanding person, and had promised to try and find a woman to help out, as Mary would have her baby at home. It was too far to go to the City, and the girls were really too young to manage at home alone. She would rather be where she could keep an eye on her family. The doctor had spoken of an orphan girl, about fourteen years old, whom they could get, but Mary felt she was rather young to come in and take over the management of a household and a new baby. However, if no one else could be obtained, she would have to do.

The little house was brimming over with a sweet, spicy odor. Mary had been baking and cooking all day; Christmas cake and steamed plum-puddings were lined up on the kitchen table, all made from Pat's mother's recipes, brought from the old country by his grandmother. Mary had dreaded getting started on them, but Pat had asked several times if she was going to make them. So now they were all finished, and she was proud of her efforts.

Saturday, and just two weeks left until Christmas! There was much excitement in the small house, although it was still early. Mom and the girls were dressed in their Sunday best, and waited now for Pop to bring the team and cutter, as they were going to the City. The train left Coulee Hill at eight o'clock, so they would have to hurry to make it on time.

Mary was wondering how she and Pat were going to manage the Christmas shopping with the girls along, but it would have to be managed somehow. They had decided on the skates and one sled.

As she heard the team, she opened the stove, pulled out two red-hot bricks, and placed them in the footwarmer—another item never heard of by Mary until they moved to this country. But one had to admit it added a great deal of comfort, there under the robes, throwing up its warmth.

Finally all was ready, and they were tucked in. Pat clucked to the horses, and they left the yard for the road at a brisk pace. The team felt frisky from so much resting in the barn. On the stoop, Trusty stood watching them as they left the yard. He would be sole guardian of the place until they returned in the evening.

The ride to town was accomplished in record time; the snow was packed hard as a rock on the road, and when the horses' shoes cut into it, it flew in a shower from their hoofs.

Pat dropped Mary and the girls off on the station platform, then left to put the team away in the livery stable. He called over his shoulder for Mary to go on in and purchase the tickets while they were waiting. She and the girls entered the yellow station. A blast of heat and tobacco-smoke hit them in the faces. The round barrel-stove was throwing off a tremendous heat; even at this early hour, three elderly men were seated around it, and each one puffed at a pipe. It was an old room, dusty and barren except for benches around the walls and one picture of the late Queen Victoria. Mary wondered why it hadn't been replaced by the present king's picture.

She walked over to the ticket window, and said, "Good morning Mr. Struthers! May I have two children and two adult tickets to Regina?"

"Oh, good morning, Mrs. Mann! Out bright and early, eh? Nice and nippy this morning, isn't it?" Mary nodded her head yes to his questions. Then he asked her, "How do you like Canada by this time?"

"I guess I'm beginning to like it fine, Mr. Struthers! But everything is so new and different, it takes time to get accustomed to it; like this cold weather, for instance—I'm wondering if I shall ever get used to that."

"You'll get used to it all right; gets in your blood after a while. You want these tickets return, don't you?"

"Oh yes, please! What time do the trains return today?" she then asked.

"There's one leaves there at four o'clock this afternoon, and another tonight." Mary thanked him, and turned in time to see

Pat come in the door. He raised his hand in greeting to Mr. Struthers, then said, "Come on, all of you! I can see the train coming."

The girls flew out the door, and Mary called after them, "Don't go out near the track. Here, Margie, you take my hand, and Betty, you go with your father."

After about an hour's ride the train pulled into Regina. As they were entering the station, Betty exclaimed, "Oh Mom, look! See those people over there. Look how funny they are dressed; even the little girls have on long ladies' dresses! Why, Mom?"

"Hush, Betty! Not so loud!" Mary cautioned, then turned to Pat and asked in a low voice, "Do you know what those people over there represent? The ones in the odd bonnets and the long dresses."

"Maybe those are the Mennonites everyone speaks of. I really don't know much about them, except that they live in settlements among themselves. Don't know why the outfit, or why they all dress alike. They have some sort of religion of their own or something," he whispered back.

They left the station with its commotion, and Mary and the girls saw their first streetcars since they had passed through Minneapolis and St. Paul on the way up to Canada. They walked along the slippery pavement, and the girls were all eyes. They dashed on ahead, and there were many oh's and ah's as they looked in the display windows, which were all brightly decorated for the Christmas season. All the people, it seemed, had their arms full of bundles, and were hustling and bustling in every direction. A couple of blocks from the station, they came to a big department store, and Mary suggested, "Let's go in here and look around." They strolled from counter to counter. Betty, full of excitement, exclaimed over a find, "Oh Mom! Look at this cute hat! Can I have it? May I try it on?"

"No, dear, it wouldn't be practical in the country. Besides, we must be careful this year about the money we spend. After Pop has a big crop of wheat next year, we can splurge a little more. However, let's stop here, and look at the material. We might find something not too expensive, and I could get enough

for a dress for each of you. How would that be?" Mom asked.

"Okay, Mom, but when are we going to see the toys and things? Can't we go see them now?" Margie coaxed. "Please Mom, come on!"

"Hush up, Margie!" Mom admonished, but she turned to Pat and told him to find out where the toys were. He walked over to a man standing in the aisle and said, "Pardon me, sir, but can you tell me where one might find the children's toys?"

"Right straight ahead, up that stairway," he answered. Then he added, "They are on the second floor."

"Well then, you and the girls go on upstairs to the toys," Mary suggested, "and I'll be up in a little while, but I want to take my time looking at these materials first."

Such a bright array of calicos, prints, and ginghams met her eyes. She hardly knew which to choose, but she finally decided on two pieces. Then she asked for outing-flannel, as there were a few more things to make for the little one, although she had kept almost all the baby clothes she had for Betty and Margie, and much of them were good yet.

When she reached the top of the stairs, she found the place crowded to overflowing with children, and grownups too. Such a clatter of voices . . . the toot-toot of trains . . . shrill blasts from whistles . . . ding-dong of bells, and whatnot. She finally discovered Pat and the girls. Margie was astride a great, white charger, with a real mane and tail, and was rocking away at forty miles an hour. Betty was standing at a near-by counter, holding in her hands a music-box out of which was coming a sweet tune.

"Mom, isn't this beautiful? I just must have one!" she gushed, and held the box up for Mom's inspection.

"Yes, it's very pretty, dear, but that is something your first beau usually gives to you. You wouldn't want Mom and Pop to give it to you."

"Well Pop's my beau, so he should give it to me," she said, looking at him with a twinkle in her eyes.

"Just listen to the blarney of her, will you, Mary!" Then he boasted, "Here I am with three sweethearts, when most men are

lucky to have one. But darlin' Mom is right, it's a gift your feller should give to you, not your old Dad."

"But gosh, I haven't got a fellow! Couldn't I have it anyway?"

"No, not today, Betty," and she closed the subject completely by the tone of her voice. Turning to Margie, she asked, "Don't you think you had better get off that horse? You'll have it worn out before Santa has a chance to deliver it to some little boy or girl."

"Would the man put my name on it? Then Santa would know where to deliver it."

"Of course not, silly!" Betty retorted, very grown up; it was almost three years since she had solved the question of Santa.

Mary expected that this would be Margie's last year to get a thrill out of Santa, and she wondered how Betty had managed to keep it to herself all this time. To Margie she replied, "No, dear, you cannot put your name on it. That is something Santa decides for himself, whether you have been good enough. Come on now, get off, and let's go look at something else."

Margie climbed down reluctantly, but just then she spied the dolls, and once again she was all agog. Then Mary remembered she must get the new wigs for the girls' dolls. She had already managed, in her spare time, to complete a brand new outfit of doll clothes. Seeing a saleslady, she went over and quietly asked, "Do you have wigs for dolls?"

"Yes we do. What color and size do you wish?"

"You had better give me one brunette, and one blonde, but they must both have curls." Measuring with her hands, she said, "The dolls' heads are about so big. Can you get them quietly, so the children won't notice?"

"Yes, I think I can," the saleslady laughed, and disappeared behind the counter.

Pat and the girls wandered over to the side, and were looking at sleds, coasters, toboggans, and many other things in the display. Mary took her package from the saleslady, and went to join them. Pat turned to her and quietly asked, "Which of those do you think we should choose? The prices seem pretty high, even

on the smaller sleds. There is one though . . . see that one about four feet long?"

Mary nodded her head, and answered, "Yes, I'm sure that one will be fine, if it isn't too expensive. You can find out, can't you? You have the sizes for the skates, haven't you?" He fumbled in his pockets and finally came up with the slip of paper on which she had written the sizes. She suggested, "Well, you find out about the sled, and get the skates, too; I'll take the girls down the aisle, and amuse them for a while. But Pat, it's going to make an immense bundle; do you suppose they might deliver it to the station for you?"

"Well, I'll find out, Mary; you go on and coax the kids away from here, and I'll meet you at the top of the stairway in a little while. Tell the girls I had to go to another department for some nails and things."

Mary turned back to the girls and asked, "Did you girls see those dishes and cooking utensils, over on that counter there? Let's go have a look, shall we? Pop has to go get some nails and things for his work."

Innocently they fell into her trap, and followed her over to the counter. Then Betty exclaimed, "Oh, look, Margie! Aren't these dishes perfect? Even pots and pans to go with them! And Mom, look, a real little iron, just like yours! The handle even comes off, so you can heat it on the stove."

"Could we have the new dishes, and the iron, Mom?" Margie coaxed.

"I don't think so, dear, as you still have all those dishes Grandma Doyle sent you a couple of years ago. They will have to do, at least for this year. I told you before, we don't want to spend much money buying things, as it would worry Pop. Maybe next year there will be money for a lot more."

They sauntered from aisle to aisle, looking at first this and then that, but finally Mom remarked, "Let's go see if Pop is back yet. He said he would meet us at the head of the stairs."

Sure enough Pat stood there, with a grin on his face, from ear to ear. He caught Mary's look of inquiry, and nodded his

head yes. Then she asked, "Where are your packages, Pat?"

"The man very kindly offered to deliver them to the station, so I wouldn't have to carry them the rest of the day. By the way, I'm starved! How about finding a place to eat?"

"Golly! Let's do; I'm hungry as a wolf," Betty put in.

"That's a very good idea," Mary admitted, "all of us had such an early breakfast, I'm sure we shall be able to do justice to food. Anyway, I'm beginning to feel the need to sit down for a while."

"Gosh! You all right Mary?" Pat quickly asked, concern in his voice. "You perhaps shouldn't have made this trip today . . . too hard on you." There was a worried frown on his face, as he took her by the arm to help her along.

"Stop fussing like a mother hen! I'll be fine as soon as I sit and rest for a little while."

They found a nice, clean restaurant, and all enjoyed a good dinner. With an hour to go before their train left, they strolled slowly through the streets, and through a small park in the center of town. The park didn't have much to offer at this time of the year, except some cold, green, wooden benches. The trees stood like tall, barren sentinels in the snow. But the family agreed that it was more than likely very lovely in the summer months, when it was all green.

The train ride back home was uneventful, and they arrived at the house around six o'clock in the evening. Even though they were all exhausted from a busy and hectic day, they must get busy with their individual duties. However, as soon as supper and dishes were done, everyone piled into bed.

Christmas had come, and now was gone! The girls had been thoroughly delighted with their gifts. The numerous packages from aunts and uncles, and of course the big, surprise packages from the grandmas and grandpas had been opened. No one was ever overlooked in these packages, and the girls could hardly wait for it to be Christmas Eve, and time to open them, as they

were always a source of delight, from the first rattle of tissue paper to the very bottom.

The girls were back in school again, after the long Christmas and New Year holiday, ready and excited to be back. Mary was glad in her heart to know they had already made warm friends, whom they were anxious to see again.

Right now she was waiting for Pat to return from Coulee Hill, where he had gone to get the young orphan girl. She felt it would be better to have the girl here with her for a while before her confinement, in order to familiarize her with the regular routine of the house. Before he left, they fixed up a single bed in the girls' room, which the new girl would share with them. Mary planned to move her own bed down to the sitting-room for a while when the baby came, as it would be warmer to get up at night, and handier in all ways; and that way she could keep her eyes on the family, and their daily doings.

Suddenly she heard the sharp squeak of the cutter as it slid over the hard snow. Looking out the window, she watched as Pat pulled up the team, then jumped out and helped a medium-sized girl from the cutter. He took out a suitcase, and they started for the house. As they entered the kitchen he called, "Oh, Mary! Come on in here and meet Loretta."

Mary entered from the sitting-room, and was startled to see such a pretty girl. Very blue eyes, delicate, fair skin, and blonde hair hanging in two thick braids over her shoulders. There was a shy, scared expression in her lovely eyes. Mary took her hand and said, "How do you do, Loretta! I'm sure you and I are going to become very good friends. I just sort of feel it! What is your last name?"

"My last name is Grey," she stammered.

"Loretta Grey. What a pretty name! Isn't it, Pat?"

"Right pretty," he said, "and pretty too, is the owner of the name."

Loretta flushed from her coat collar to the roots of her hair, but Mary quickly came to her rescue, and said, "That's nothing but Irish blarney, Loretta. You'll get used to that around here."

Off with you now, Pat, and put your team away, while I show Loretta where to put her things. Bring your suitcase, my dear, and come with me."

As Mary led the way upstairs, she remarked, "I hope you won't mind doubling up in the girls' room? We are pretty cramped for space in this house. In a day or so however, we'll move my bed downstairs, and then you and I will stay down there, when the little one arrives. I thought it would be more convenient, and warmer too, when one has to be up nights. Doctor Clark said you were fourteen; is that right?"

"Yes, I was fourteen last October."

Then Mary asked, "How long have you been an orphan, Loretta?"

"Oh, I don't ever remember being anything else. You see I have three sisters, and first one and then the other raised me. They are quite a good deal older than I am, and all of them are married."

"But what about your schooling? Seems you're pretty young not to be in school yet," Mary suggested.

"Oh, I did go to school all the time, until last June, when I graduated from the eighth grade. My sisters all have large families, and I felt I should be earning my own way now. I have had several jobs with Doctor Clark since then, and he says I'm very good with babies and children." She hesitated for a moment, then added, "Don't you think he is wonderful? He has taught me all I know, and is always so kind and patient when I make mistakes. He just insisted I come and help you." She looked shyly at Mary, then continued, "He said you were a very lovely woman, and I would enjoy working for you a great deal."

Mary saw that her face was flushed with embarrassment, so she said, "Why, Loretta! What a lovely thing for Doctor to say, and thank you for telling me. Makes me feel real warm and cozy-like. I'm sure you and I are going to get along splendidly!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Mann; I'm ready to go downstairs now, as it must be getting close to the time the children come from school. Mr. Mann told me all about Betty and Margie, on the way from town, and I'm anxious to meet them too. We'd better

move your bed downstairs tomorrow, as you shouldn't be climbing up and down these stairs every day now."

"Golly! I feel like an extra-special invalid already!" Mary laughed, but she was enjoying it thoroughly. "Don't you go spoiling me, so I won't know how to act when you leave, although I hope we can keep you for a long while; money is rather scarce around here this year, though, with moving, and then the new baby coming, so all in all I can't indulge in too many luxuries, you see. Oh! There are the girls now! Such a racket they make, but they really pep the place up when they get home."

"Hi Mom! Where are you?" Betty called as soon as she opened the door.

"Right here, dears!" Mary answered, as she came into the kitchen followed by Loretta. "Girls, this is Loretta, who has come to live with us for a few weeks."

"How do you do, girls?" Loretta told them both.

"Hello!" they answered, and looked at her with curiosity.

"Don't stare, my dears! You'll embarrass Loretta," Mom quickly cautioned. "You are both to be nice, and help her as much as you can; also, when she asks you to do something you are to mind her, within reason. She's to be like a big sister to you both. Both of you understand, don't you?"

"All right, Mom," Betty replied somewhat dubiously, as she didn't understand why she was suddenly to inherit a big sister whom she had never seen before, but she was willing to take it in her stride.

Not so Margie, who was more plain-spoken. She queried, "How come we get a big sister all of a sudden? And where did she come from?"

"Margie dear, please don't be so blunt!" Mom admonished. "Loretta is going to live with us for a while, and help me with the work, and she is quite a good deal older than either of you, and naturally will know better whether something is right or wrong. That is what I meant when I said you were to mind her. Not really that, but at least listen when she tells you something. Am I going to have cooperation from you both?"

"Oh sure! Of course, Mom!" both girls quickly assured her.

"We didn't really mean any wrong, Loretta," Betty then offered for both of them.

"That's all right, Betty, and you too, Margie. I'm sure we are going to manage nicely. You just wait and see."

The girls seemed satisfied, and as if the subject had never been, Margie burst forth with, "Oh, guess what, Mom? Betty's got a fellow!"

"Margie! You shut up! What a thing to say; you know that's not true," Betty quickly retorted, her face flushed from embarrassment, and anger, too.

"Well, Curt Tate asked you to ride home on his pony tonight. Seemed kind of silly, you riding and him walking, but he finally got on, and rode too, Mom."

Mom looked at Betty with a question on her face. Quickly Betty assured her it was nothing. "He promised to teach me to ride is all; I've been wanting to learn for a long time. Margie always tries to make something out of nothing." With that parting shot, she dashed up the stairs.

As she stood in her room, the words on the note went over and over in her mind, "Will you ride home with me tonight? I like you best of all the girls in school!" And Curt's name had been signed to it. She promised herself she would ignore it, but she wanted so badly to learn to ride, and this was her chance. She looked up after she read the note, and caught him watching her, so she quickly nodded her head yes.

While riding home, he had suddenly asked if he could get on too, as he had something to tell her. Curiosity had got the better of her, so she told him he could. There had been a chorus of catcalls from the other kids, and much teasing, but finally they forgot about them. Betty asked him, "What did you want to tell me?" After a long hesitation, he blurted out, "Will you be my girl?"

"Don't be silly, Curt! What a thing to ask; you know we're way too young!" Betty had answered sharply. "My Mom and Pop would skin me if they knew!"

"They don't have to know, do they? No one needs to know but you and me. It can be a secret, just between us. What do you say?"

"Well, it would be kind of fun," she'd agreed. "I love secrets . . . but don't you dare tell anyone, or I'll sure be mad!"

"I won't tell a soul," he'd promised and, as they were at her gate, he had bid her good night, and said he would wait for her in the morning.

All this was running through her mind. She walked over to the mirror and looked at herself. She felt she must look differently, look older, more mature; look like someone a young man could be interested in. Her face felt red and hot, but it didn't look a speck different than usual. Same red-black curls; same tilted nose, covered with freckles. Mom had promised the freckles would leave when she got older, but there seemed just as many as ever! And how she hated the darn things!

The big double bed of Mom's was now situated in the sitting-room, and took up a great deal of space. The single bed, which Loretta had slept in, had been moved from the girls' room to Mom's and Pop's bedroom, for Pat to sleep on. The girls were full of curiosity, as to why the big bed was downstairs, and their questions were evaded by Mom and Pop. Loretta bore the brunt of those questions, for they felt more free to question her about it, but she simply answered, "Your Mom isn't feeling too well, so we moved her down here; that way I can look after her better, and doctor her, and in no time at all she will be feeling her old self again."

Both girls quickly looked at Mom, with anxious expressions on their faces, but she assured them it was nothing serious, and said, "I'll be all right in no time at all . . . just a little upset now, that's all."

They both seemed satisfied with her explanation, and ran off to play again.

"Golly! I could hardly keep my face straight, Loretta. I do

hope these pains hold off until the girls are in bed tonight." Then, as an afterthought, she asked, "Pat should soon be back from seeing the doctor, don't you think?"

"Yes, he should be here any time now. Is there anything you want, Mrs. Mann?" Loretta asked, with concern in her voice, for she was nervous, too, as the time drew near. She hoped the doctor would come back with Pat.

Mary answered her query, and said, "No, dear, you go on and prepare supper. I'll manage all right. But I do often wonder why there has to be so much pain with childbirth. It's lucky we are made so we soon forget things; here I had completely forgotten what I went through with Betty and Margie; but . . . it's darn realistic right now!"

In the midst of Mary's reasoning, Pat arrived home with word that Doctor Clark would be by between eight and nine tonight. After this news Mary felt better, knowing he would be able to be with her. She had worried for fear he might have another call which would be more of an emergency than hers, and wouldn't be able to come at all.

"Margie! Wake up! Do you hear anything?" Betty asked, as she shook Margie vigorously.

Margie tried to open her eyes, and grunted, "Huh? What you say, Betty?"

Betty plied her question again. "Listen . . . do you hear anything?"

Margie was finally awake enough to give her some attention, so she listened, and then said, "Why, it sounds like a baby crying!"

"That's what I thought!" Betty bounded out of bed, and started for the stairs, then remembered that it might be company, so turned back and quickly donned her clothes. She hissed at Margie, as she went by the bed, "Come on, you! Let's go see!" but Margie just grunted again and flopped over on the other side, preparing to go back to sleep.

Betty tiptoed down the stairs, but Mom had heard her when

she first bounded out of bed, so when she opened the stair door Mom called to her, "Come on in, dear, and see your new baby sister!"

Betty's eyes were big as dollars as she walked to the basket, and peeped under the blanket, which Loretta held up. "Oh, Mommy! Just like a real live doll. She is beautifull! When did she come? And who brought her? Golly! I'd like to hold her; can I?" One question tumbled after the other, but Mom smiled quietly and answered her last question: "I'm afraid she is too little for you to hold yet; even I'm almost scared to hold her, but after a few days you can, when she is stronger."

Betty flew to the stairway and started to shout at Margie, then remembered the baby was asleep, so she dashed up the stairs and pulled the covers off Margie, "Hey, Margie! Get up! Guess what? We have a little new baby sister downstairs!"

Margie blinked a couple of times, then it finally sank in. She jumped up, and started to fumble with her clothes. "Here, help me dress, Betty! I can't seem to find the buttons." Between them she was finally dressed, and they both rushed downstairs.

"Good morning, Margie!" Mom greeted her, but Margie had eyes for nothing but the basket. She just stood and looked, and looked; then finally asked, "What's her name?"

"We haven't decided yet, Margie. You see, we had a name all picked for a brother, but I guess God decided we should have another sister instead," Mom answered; then she suggested, "It's getting late, girls; you'd better go wash, and let Loretta help fix your hair. She will make breakfast for you, and please hurry"—for they still stood at the basket—"or you will be late for school. We'll discuss a name for sister tonight, when Pop is here, too."

"Where is Pop?" Betty then asked.

"He went back to town with Doctor Clark, to get some things we need," Loretta answered, and she started to comb out Margie's tangled curls.

"Did Doctor Clark bring the baby, Mom?" Margie asked.

"Yes, he helped, dear, but it's a long story, and some day I'll tell you both all about it, but right now you simply must hurry. Betty, you pack the lunches; you know how to do that."

Finally they were ready to leave, so they came to kiss Mom good-bye, and take another peek at sister. As they went down the lane to the road, Betty saw Curt waiting. She had completely forgotten that yesterday he had said he would wait for her this morning.

"Hi!" he called. "Come on, you two! Hurry up, or we're all going to be late this morning!"

"Oh, you go on ahead," Betty told him. "I'll walk with Margie this morning."

"No, I'll put you both up, otherwise you can't make it on time." He dismounted and helped Betty into the saddle, hoisted Margie up, then climbed up behind them both. When they got started, he asked, "What made you so late? Is someone sick at your house? My Dad said the lights were on nearly all night."

"No one is sick, but we have a little new baby sister at our house," Betty answered him, "and we were so excited and thrilled that we just couldn't seem to get ready for school."

"Gosh! That's nice! Wish I had a sister sometimes, instead of two big brothers, who bully me around all the time. A sister would be kind of fun, I think."

"Well, we wish it had been a brother," Margie offered, "but gosh! she's so cute, guess we'll love her anyway, won't we, Betty?"

"Uh-huh," she answered. Her mind wasn't following the conversation very much, for she had begun to wonder how sister got to their house, and how she had slept through it all.

As they entered the gate of the schoolyard, Curt said, "The kids are still all outside, so guess we're not late after all." Then, without any warning, a snowball hit the pony on the rump. She bolted for the barn, and the three kids ducked their heads just in time as she dashed through the barn door. "Someone is sure going to get poked for that!" Curt stormed, as he lifted the girls down. He quickly removed saddle and bridle from the pony. As they left the barn, they found all the kids huddled in a group, watching and waiting for them.

Curt's voice cracked like a whip as he asked, "Who threw that snowball? You better own up, whoever it was!"

No one answered, so he looked the group over carefully. Finally his eyes stopped on Harry, and he shouted, "You did it, didn't you?" He made a lunge for him, but Harry evaded his grasp, and started to run across the yard. He called over his shoulder, "Sissy! Big sissy! Hobnobbing with the girls!" Then, in a singsong voice, "Curt's sweet on Betty! Curt's sweet on—" Curt caught him, and fists started to fly. Through his teeth Curt hissed, "Take that back, you jealous bully, or I'll break your neck!"

Harry finally admitted he had enough, and that he was sorry. Curt got up off him, and told him to apologize to Betty and Margie. Harry stood and glowered, trying to make up his mind to do so, but then . . . teacher rang the bell, and called them in to class.

"Okay!" Curt said, "but don't you forget to do so at recess, and if you don't I'll have to do a little gentle reminding again."

Shortly after they were settled in their seats, the boy behind Betty gave her a poke and whispered, "Here's a note for you!" Betty put her hand down to the crack in the desk seat, and he shoved the note into it. She looked up quickly, to see if the teacher watched, but she was busy with the first class, so she unfolded the small piece of paper, and found that the note was from Lucille. She said that she was glad about the new sister, and would Betty meet her at recess? She glanced at Lucille, then nodded her head in assent.

Class was dismissed at ten thirty for recess; as the rest trooped outside, Betty waited for Lucille. As she came up she asked, "What's the new baby like?"

"Oh, it's little, and kind of red-looking, but cute-like too," Betty answered.

"How's your Mom feeling? Did she have Doctor Clark?" Lucille questioned.

"Well, Mom was in bed yet, now that you mention it, and Doctor Clark had been there, but was gone. Would Mom be feeling bad, Lucille? Was that why she was still in bed?"

"Silly! Don't tell me you thought the doctor brought the baby," and she started to laugh in a very superior way.

"I really don't know, Lucille," Betty admitted. "Mom said something about Doctor Clark helping to bring it, and that she would explain it some other time."

"Can you keep a secret?" Lucille then asked.

"Sure I can! You know I can!"

"Well, the doctor don't bring the baby at all. It's made right in a woman's body. I don't know how, but it is," she whispered. "I heard some of the older girls talking about it one day, but when they found me listening they chased me away."

Betty was shocked, and was just ready to tell Lucille that she didn't believe a word of it, when the bell rang and called them to class again. However, she managed to whisper, "Meet me at lunchtime, will you?"

Lucille nodded her head yes, as she hurried to take her seat.

During their lunch hour, they discussed the question pro and con, but did not get very far with it, as the other kids sensed some secret, and kept hanging around all the time.

They were all walking down the road after school, when Curt suddenly rode up on his pony, and demanded of Betty, "I thought you were riding home with me?"

"Well, I'm not!" she snapped, "I don't like fights, and I'm not riding with you again!"

"Is that so? I suppose you prefer to walk with Harry, eh?" Without waiting for an answer, he and the pony were gone down the road, the pony making the snow fly from its sharp shoes.

Betty looked after them, already sorry she had been so flip, for she really liked him, and had so enjoyed riding the pony. Harry interrupted her thoughts with, "What a sorehead! Guess he's the one who's jealous!"

"Well, he isn't!" She snapped at him, too. "And you mind your own business, will you?" She decided that she didn't want to walk with any of them, so told Margie to hurry up, and she loped off ahead of them all. She was fed up with the whole bunch!

"What's the matter with you, Betty?" Margie panted, as she tried to keep up with her. "What's eating you, anyway?

You've been acting funny all day! And by the way, what was the big secret between you and Lucille?"

"Oh, nothing . . . you wouldn't understand about it, anyway." She decided she had left the rest of them far enough behind, so she slowed to a walk.

Margie then asked, "What do you think we should call sister?"

"Oh, Mom and Pop will decide on a name; maybe they have already while we've been at school." They plodded along in silence for the rest of the way home. As they entered the kitchen, they found Loretta busy there, told her hello, then rushed into the other room, where Mom and the baby were.

Mary looked up as they entered and said, "Hello, darlings! Did you have a good day at school?"

Betty stood looking at the baby, and did not answer, but Margie spoke up and said, "Curt and Harry had a fight over Betty! And Mom, Betty and Lucille whispered all day, and they wouldn't tell me what it was about."

"A fight! Whatever about, Betty?" Mom looked at her for an answer.

"Nothing much, Mom, but you see Margie and I rode to school with Curt this morning—that is on his pony—as we were late. Well, as we came into the schoolyard, Harry threw a snowball at the pony, and she bolted into the barn, with us all on. It made Curt mad, for we could have all been hurt. So he poked Harry for it, that's all," she answered.

"But Harry called Curt a sissy, and said you were his girl," Margie added to the story.

Mary saw an embarrassed expression on Betty's face, so directed her glance to Margie, and asked, "Isn't someone around here being rather a tattletale? You know we never allow tattling in this house. You go and change your dress, and as punishment you will bring in all the wood tonight. I mean alone, too, and don't go pouting about it, or I'll give Loretta permission to paddle you for me. Betty, you look after the eggs, and then go to the barn and see if you can help Pop with something. Margie, when you finish lugging the wood, you come back to

the house, and help Loretta to get the table ready for supper."

When Margie left to go upstairs, Mary told Betty, "Don't you worry about what Margie says. What were you and Lucille whispering about? Was it about where baby sister came from?"

Betty nodded her head yes, too embarrassed to answer. So Mary went on, "I said I would tell you, and I will! You understand something about the animals mating, for we have talked about that before. Well it's practically the same with people. The baby is nurtured and fed in the mother's body for nine months, and then it is ready to be brought into the world. That is the way God made us, and when you are older you will understand it better. It is nothing to be whispered about, or to be ashamed of, my dear. Only don't say anything of what I have told you to Margie, as she is still too young to know what you are talking about. It will be a secret between just we two; not even Pop will be in on this one. Is that all right with you, dear?"

Betty threw herself down on the bed, and started to cry. Mary took her in her arms, and patted and kissed her; told her how much she loved her great big girl, and how she was depending upon her while she was in bed. With so much praise, Betty began to feel wanted again, and Mary sensed that she had been lost in a merry-go-round of thoughts which she had not been able to cope with.

Finally she stopped crying, and asked, "How long do you have to stay in bed, Mom?"

"Oh, I feel good enough to get up right now, but Doctor says no, not for ten days or two weeks. So here I stay for that long, anyway. Come on now, my dear, you hustle and get your work done, and I'll see you at supper."

When Betty left the house, Mary called to Loretta, and said, "How do you suppose it would be to open up this table in here, and set it for supper tonight? That way we can all be in one room at mealtime, as I hate eating by myself."

"Why, I think that is a wonderful idea," Loretta admitted, then said, "I'll get right at it, as I have things ready in the kitchen. Where do you keep the leaves for the table?"

"They are there in the stairway, behind the door. One should make it large enough for you four, shouldn't it?"

When Margie returned to help set the table, she was more than surprised to see it all finished, and in the sitting-room at that. Pat and Betty gave a whoop of joy, then Pat exclaimed, "Gosh! A celebration, eh? It should be that too, what with you feeling so chipper, Mary, and that cute little chipmunk there in the basket. By the way, how do you two like your new sister?"

"We think she's swell!" Betty answered first.

"Betty! What was that word?" Mom sternly asked.

"I'm sorry Mom, I should have said, 'We think she is wonderful,'" she corrected herself.

"That's better, dear. Remember my ears are still working, even if I am here in bed."

"Well Margie, what do you think of her? You haven't said a word yet," Pat again said.

"I think she's cute, but I'll be glad when she is big enough to play."

Pat laughed, and said, "I'm afraid it will be a couple of days before she will be able to get out and run you a race. Personally, I like her just like she is, a dainty little redhead fairy." He stood and looked down at her. "I feel just like a big, lumbering oaf, when I look at her little hands and feet. Makes one wonder how they would ever be big enough to run and play."

Mary looked at him, then remarked, "If you had your way, I think you would like there to be one in that basket all the time."

"Indeed I would, at that! It's a wonderful idea!"

"Well, then, you can change places with me," she retorted rather heatedly, "it's no picnic for the mother, I can assure you!"

He turned to her, leaned down, and kissed her cheek. "Darling, I know, I'm just talking through my hat, and you know it. But they're so wonderful, I just start talking, and never know when I should shut up." He straightened and, as he looked around the room, he asked, "Who had a bright idea today for a name for sister?" As no one answered, he suggested, "How

would it be to start with the letters of the alphabet, until we find what we want?"

Just then Loretta started bringing in the food from the kitchen, so Mary told Betty to go and help her. When it was all on the table, she brought in Mary's large breadboard, on which she had set her supper.

"Oh, what an ingenious idea, Loretta! Much better than that wobbly tray," Mary exclaimed.

She had to admit that the supper was very good, and that Loretta did very well for her age . . . with, of course, a few suggestions she had made.

Pat stowed away several large mouthfuls, then said, "Let's hear some names beginning with the letter 'A.' We'll suggest, and Mom will be the judge, eh?"

"Anna begins with 'A,'" Margie offered first.

"Amelia and Amy," Betty offered next, and they looked toward Mom.

"I don't like any of those," Mom put in, "better try 'B,' and see what we get."

"There are a lot of 'B's,'" Loretta suggested. "There's Barbara, Beatrice, and Bernice."

"Oh, yes, how about Bertha, Blanche, or Bridget?" Pat asked.

"I like Barbara and Bridget," Mary agreed. "We'll hold those two aside. Now try 'C.'"

"I know a girl named Celia, and one named Catherine," Margie piped up.

"Then there's Cynthia, like my doll is named," Betty put in, "also Caroline and Charlotte and oh, yes, Cora begins with 'C,' too."

"Like any of those?" Pat asked Mary.

"Yes, I like some of those, but let's hear some starting with 'D' now," she suggested.

"Most all of my nieces' names begin with 'D,' it seems," Loretta put in. "There are Delia, Diana, Dora, and Dorothy."

"Golly! Someone better bring paper and pencil," Mary laughed, "my mind's becoming confused." Betty jumped up and got pencil and paper, then Mom said, "Write down Barbara

and Bridget; Cynthia and Charlotte; Dorothy and Diana, and for 'E' I'd like to suggest Elena, which I saw in a book somewhere, and it has always stayed with me. Then if I may jump ahead, I like Janet very much, too."

"Well then, what's wrong with Janet Elena?" Pat asked. "Any better ideas?" and he began to laugh.

Mary looked at him, then asked, "Now, what's so funny?"

"Oh, it was only that here the rest of us were working so hard, trying to find a name, and you had it all decided in your mind before we even started. It's a smart one you are, darling! No wonder you're such a success with your family. Never a word that you had a name all picked out, until the rest of us had our chance to make suggestions, too. Isn't that so?" And he looked to the girls for an answer.

But Mary interrupted with, "Well, I do like Janet Elena. I suppose it will be shortened to Jan, but I even like that."

Everyone agreed they did like the name Janet Elena very much, and, if as if in answer to it all, little Janet started to cry, so Pat said, "Poor darling, she's trying to put in her two cents' worth. Ten chances to one she doesn't approve of her name at all, but a fat chance she has to do anything about it."

The remaining weeks of winter slipped away, and the spring thaws started. Mary never saw such mud in her life; each time you went outside the black gumbo stuck to your feet until they were the size of gunboats and you could scarcely lift them. The kitchen floor was a constant worry to her, and she had Loretta scrubbing at it most of the time.

Yes, Loretta was still with them. When it came time for her to leave, she cried and carried on. Mary and Pat tried to explain to her that they could not afford to keep her any longer. But she just kept crying, and finally blurted out, "Oh, I do so hate to leave! This is the very first time in my life I ever really felt settled and happy, like I was home."

Mary and Pat looked at one another, then Pat finally suggested, "Well, you know there is no money to pay you a

salary, but if you like this plan, you are welcome to stay. We will give you your clothes, and spending money, and you can become one of the family."

Then she really cried, but in a while managed to say, "Oh, I would love that! And can I call you Mom and Pop, like the girls?"

By this time Mary was crying too, as she sensed the loneliness of the poor child. She put her arms around her, then said, "Why, bless your heart! From this moment on, for as long as you wish, we will love you like one of our very own."

"Oh, thank you!" she managed to say, then added, "Mom and Pop!"

Then they looked at one another, and finally all started to laugh, the tension broken; but Pat as usual must add his bit of blarney: "Faith now, isn't it something the way the females flock around me? Here you stand, Patrick Mann, sole guardian of five sweethearts! Sure, and it's almost a harem, it is!"

"Don't be giving yourself all the credit, my pompous nitwit!" Mary started to tease, but saw a hurt expression come into his eyes, so she walked over and put both arms around his huge bulk. Giving him a squeeze, she remarked, "Don't mind me, dear, I was only teasing, anyway." She felt the tenseness leave his body, and he held her close for a minute, then said, "Ye gods, woman! You can sure take the starch out of me in a hurry, with one of your biting remarks. I'm sure going to be thankful for your quietness, Loretta; it will help offset the Irish tempers around here."

Mary agreed. "Yes, Loretta is very even-tempered, and I do hope we don't all take advantage of it too much. Always remember, dear, when you have anything on your mind you are to talk it over with your new Mom and Pop, just as if we actually were your own mother and father."

"Gee, but you're both swell!"

Mary froze at the word "swell," which she could not seem to tolerate, and she said, "Well, here goes your Mom speaking to you, Loretta. You are not to say 'swell'! It is a word I cannot stand! It's so sort of cheap or something, and there are so many

other words that can be used instead. Let me hear a correction, dear," and she smiled to soften her words.

Loretta's face flushed with embarrassment, but she managed to control her voice, and said, "Thanks, Mom! I should have said, 'I think you and Pop are simply wonderful.' Is that all right?"

"Yes, that will do nicely," Mom assured her, then added, "Now I think we have all dallied long enough, and we had better get busy at our work."

"Right you are, Mary!" Pat agreed. "I have to go into town, and pick up the young fellow who is coming to work for us. He is a son of a man who runs an elevator in town, and he told me he could recommend him very highly. It's almost time to start the spring work in the fields, and I will need him then. If this wind keeps up, the land should be dried out enough to start next week."

"I do hope he will be a good man. How old a person is he?" Mary inquired.

"I think he's only about nineteen; pretty young, but I understand from his dad that he is a big, strapping youngster, and has always worked on farms, so he'll perhaps know more about it than I do. There's quite a few of those green Englishmen around looking for work, but I really was afraid to try one, as I'm green to this country myself. Better to get someone who has lived and worked here; they'll understand the country's peculiarities more."

"I'm sure that is a sensible way to look at it, dear. You run along and get him, but before you pull out, drop by here, and I'll give you a list of groceries we need."

"I'll do that, Mary," and he left to get his team.

It was now the middle of May. The seeding was all done, potatoes planted, and garden already in. Many things had happened in the past two months. Two mares had colts, which were a source of delight to Betty and Margie. Mary was petrified each time she saw them leading the colts around, and now the

latest talk was that, as soon as they were a little older, they were going to teach them to pull the wagon.

Four hens had hatched out their broods of baby chicks. There was one old hen who was completely puzzled by her family of young ducks. She couldn't keep them out of the puddle by the windmill. She stood on the edge, and clucked and clucked to them, but they disregarded her fretting, and went right on enjoying their swim. The barnyard was full of the noises of young things. Two old sows were being followed by their young piglets, and there was the bawl of calves for their mothers.

The berry bushes were in full bloom, and there was the constant hum of bees, as they hovered among the blossoms looking for nectar to make their honey from. For the girls there was the thrill of the first crocus they found, and now the mayflowers were in bloom. Everywhere could be heard the song and chirp of birds calling to one another, each looking for a mate, and much to-do about the building of nests. Out toward the pasture, and across in the fields, the gophers could be heard cheeping. Pat had taught the girls how to snare them with a long piece of twine, then how to remove the tails, which could be turned in for bounty. Great plans were being made to spend the money they were going to make during the summer holidays. It was surprising how quickly the number mounted up; already they had collected over a hundred.

Mary still laughed when she remembered Betty getting a weasel in her snare instead of a gopher. The nervy thing started to chase her, and kept throwing off its offensive odor. She had come tearing toward the house, dragging the thing with the twine, all the time screaming for Mom to come help. Mary had taken the thing and, before she thought, had dunked it in the rainbarrel several times, and then to her dismay she realized she had ruined the whole barrel of soft water. Loretta had taken one look at her, then started to laugh. Mary hadn't known if it was funny or not for a moment; then she decided it was, and laughed, too. Pat and Jack, the hired man, had roared with laughter when told.

Betty and Margie had studied hard all season, and in Febru-

ary teacher advanced them; Betty to grade six, and Margie into grade three. Now there was just one month left until it would be examination time again.

May 24, the birthday of the late Queen Victoria, was a holiday celebrated throughout Canada. The entire Mann family, plus Loretta and Jack, were joining several of the neighbors for a big picnic at "The Grove." There had been hustle and bustle since the crack of dawn. The little house was brimming over with good smells; fried chicken, baked ham, and a hot spice-cake, just coming out of the oven.

From the washstand where he was shaving, Pat exclaimed, "Roaring thunderbolts! You women are ruining me with all those delicious smells. I'll never be able to stand it till noon. How about you, Jack?"

Jack who was using a toothbrush on his teeth with the vigor of a coal-shoveler, replied through the foam, "Smells awful good, Mrs. Mann! You're a wonderful cook, you know!"

"Thank you very much, Jack," she answered; then, turning to Loretta, she suggested, "You run on now and help the girls dress, and make yourself pretty. I'll just finish this, then manage little Jan and myself." After Loretta left for upstairs, she turned back to Jack and asked, "Are you comfortable out there in that granary? I've meant to ask you at least a dozen times. I know it's pretty rustic, but I simply could not find a corner here in the house to put you in."

"Why, it's just splendid, Mrs. Mann; I'm comfortable as a bug in a rug. You should come out, and see how cozy it's becoming. I've added another rug, and brought over some books, and personal effects from home."

"That's nice, but you let me know if there is anything you need, won't you?" He agreed that he would, and then he left to dress. Mary remarked to Pat, "I'm so glad that he seems satisfied, as I'm sure he comes from a very nice family, and is accustomed to much more. It really had me worried."

"Oh he's a real boy-man, I should say—and he can manage

to make any place home, I'll bet. I'm going up to dress now; you coming?"

"I'll be right with you, dear, just as soon as I change Janet, and put on her dress and bonnet." She busied herself with the baby, and was finally ready to go upstairs to dress. She found the upstairs in a turmoil. Betty was arguing with Loretta, and Pat was trying to quell the battle. She asked, "Whatever is going on here? What is all the noise about anyway?"

Pat answered her: "Betty's some crazy notion about her hair, and Loretta can't manage it right."

"Betty! What is this all about? Do you always have to start a scene, when everyone is trying to hurry and get dressed?" Mary asked her.

"Oh, Mother, I want my hair in braids, and then wound around my head, something like Loretta's is, and she says it's too old for me."

"Well, it *is* too old for you!" Mary told her. "Leave it in curls as usual."

"No! I don't want it that way! You'd think I was about six years old. Curls! I hate them!" And she was already in tears about it all.

"For gosh sakes! Wear it in corkscrews if you want, and see who cares!" Pat roared. "I'm sick of the argument, and if you look like a goon with it that way, you'll just look like a goon, that's all! Close that door this instant, and leave your mother in peace to get dressed!"

"That's no way to talk, Pat!" she admonished, after the girls had closed the door. "What kind of philosophy was that you were preaching the other day?" Then she laughed, and added, "It's rather hard to practice a set philosophy on a growing family, isn't it, dear?"

"I guess so," he said, "but then they should have something to say about things, too. That is, some originality, like Betty about her hair, or else they'll just be one in a flock of sheep. You about ready, dear?" he then asked, and walked up behind her and kissed her on the ear.

A thrill ran the entire length of her spine, but she dared not

look at him or she would be lost, so she just went on dressing.

He noticed her silence, so he said, "Sorry, sweetheart, I shouldn't have done that, but gosh! how can I resist you standing there in that ruffly thing?" Then he just stood and looked at her, but finally reached out and folded her in his arms.

"Pat! Stop it!" she gasped, between kisses, ready to yield if pushed much farther. "You know the children might come out any instant, and . . . please, you're mussing my hair, Pat!"

He paid no heed to her, just kept her pressed against him, then he whispered, "Woman! Woman! What things you do to me!"

"Oh, Pat!" she breathed, as she relaxed completely in his arms. "You Irishman! You'd have life one merry-go-round of lovemaking. Darling, I do love you so very much, but you must let me dress now. Please go on and help Jack get the team ready. I'll be ready in a jiffy . . . if you will let me alone." She pushed him away, and reluctantly he let her go.

As he started down the stairs, he laughed up at her, and said, "For two pins, I'd carry you off to the haymow with me, this very instant!"

"Idiot!" She laughed as she stooped down, picked up one of her shoes, and let it fly at him. He dodged and continued on down the stairs, laughing to himself. Margie stuck her head out their door, and asked, "What fell, Mom?"

"Oh, your Pop was teasing me, and I tossed one of my shoes at him. Be a good girl, and get it off the stairway for me, will you?"

Mary wondered how she could keep on cooling his ardor, and still have him love her, but she couldn't seem to do otherwise. Each time he touched her a flame started burning, and continued until it seemed it would consume her entirely. Funny thing: he started the flame, and he had to extinguish it, too. That was why so often she held him at arm's length, when he started his silly lovemaking during the day, for it was only after they had retired for the night that the flame burned out. Then she lay close in his arms, and enjoyed a blissful sweet repose, which was soon followed by a deep sleep; often the dreams

which accompanied it were filled with an Irishman seeking his quests, but they did not seem to disturb her much, for she was a strong, healthy individual, and awakened each morning full of zest and vigor again!

Bringing her mind back to the present, she called to the girls to hurry, as Pop and Jack had the team at the door. Pat was busy stowing away the baskets of food as they came out of the house. Eventually all were settled in the surrey, with Pat driving the team. Jack and Margie were in the front seat with him, and Loretta, Betty, and Mom, with Jan on her lap, in the back seat. Everyone was in a high humor, and the five miles to The Grove were soon covered. As they drove into the picnic grounds, they discovered the place swarming with people. Mary was rather disappointed, as she had expected to see a real grove of trees; instead there were a few rather sickly-looking poplars, but they did manage to make some shade for the tables placed under them.

This was Mary's first excursion among her neighbors, but Pat seemed to know everyone, and was enjoying himself as he introduced her to them all. She soon felt at home among them, and started to help some of the women as they tried to get the enormous amount of food organized for lunch.

The girls saw most of their school friends, so they were off with them the instant their feet hit the ground. Jack returned from tying up the team, and he and Loretta wandered off into the crowd.

Pat as usual was in the midst of everything. Organizing sack races; three-legged races; races for the boys, and then for the girls; even a race for the fat men and one for the fat women. Some man had brought a machine to make popcorn. Under one of the tables was cold pop for the youngsters, and beer for the men.

The food was finally on the tables, and what a banquet it was! There seemed enough for an army, but everyone just ate, and then ate some more. Some wandered off for a while, and then returned and started all over again. In the beginning Mary

had been sure there would be a great deal left, but gradually the food disappeared.

During the afternoon two baseball teams came, and everyone watched the game. It was a good, close game, too. Pat, Jack, and the girls shouted until they were hoarse.

Home again that evening, exhausted, somewhat sunburned, but thoroughly satisfied that it had been a wonderful holiday, the Manns ended their first 24th of May. They were to witness many more, in the years to come, but it was hard to say whether any were more thoroughly enjoyed than this very first one.

In May, a year before, the whole world had been saddened by the passing of King Edward VII of England. George V had ascended to the throne, and his eldest son, Prince Edward, became the Prince of Wales on the following June 23. Now almost a year later, great preparations were being made for King George's coronation at Westminister Abbey. Neighbors who had been in Regina said that the streets were beautifully decorated with flags and bunting, and that the Royal Northwest Mounted Police were going to put on a show. As June 22, the day of the coronation, drew near Pat asked Mary, "Would you like to go to the show in Regina? I hear it will be quite an affair."

"I'm sure it will be a beautiful sight to see; I've heard many things about the Royal Mounted, and their beautiful horses. They say the horses are almost human in doing their tricks. But I really don't see how we can manage to go, Pat. It will be at night; there will be a train ride back, and I doubt there is a train that late. We wouldn't be able to take the children, and somehow I feel guilty going off and enjoying myself without them. They won't be going to school that day, but will have to be here to go the next, and it's so close to vacation and examinations and all, I wouldn't want them to miss a day. No, let's not go, Pat . . . but thanks, dear, for the nice thought."

"You're the boss, Mary," he replied, "but I thought you haven't been to anything like it before, and have been stuck

home with the children for years—maybe you would want to go.” He was quiet for a few seconds, then added, “I’ll sure be glad when we can afford an automobile; then the run to Regina won’t be anything.”

“Don’t get highfalutin ideas, Pat! It takes a great deal of money to buy an auto, and money to run it afterward, too. I’m kind of like the bay team, jittery and nervous of them yet.”

“Heavenly day, Mary! Everyone will have one soon,” he exclaimed. “Autos aren’t just a fad that’s going to be here one day and gone again tomorrow! You’re going to see them for as long as you live!”

“Maybe you’re right,” she replied, “but for the present, anyway, I’ll be perfectly satisfied with the horses. They at least don’t burn a gallon of gasoline each time they lift a foot.”

“Well, oats and hay are worth something, too; and that driving team don’t do a thing but fill their faces, as they’re too light to use in the fields. They don’t get enough exercise. I wouldn’t trust them with you or the girls to drive by yourselves; and with an auto, it just goes or stops whenever you will it.”

“Don’t you go getting notions I’m going to drive an auto, Pat!” Mary retorted. “You’ll have to wait until Betty is old enough, and then teach her to drive it, for this much I know: I’ll never drive one of the things!”

“Okay, dear! We won’t quarrel about it now, when I haven’t even got one,” he said. “You’ll perhaps change your mind by the time we can afford to own one.”

The long-awaited summer had really arrived, bringing hot, sultry days, filled with the constant buzzing of flies. How could there be so many millions of them? Mary wondered. But at least the nights were cool. Such amazing nights, with their long twilights which lasted until almost ten o’clock at night.

Mary stood at her kitchen door and looked out over the fields. The wheat stood tall and straight, swaying in the breeze. It looked like a great, green ocean, rocking and rocking away. Over toward the northeast she could see Pat and Jack, each with

his six-horse team, as they worked at the summerfallow, and prepared it for next year's crop. A great dust-cloud followed each outfit.

In the east a big, black cloud was rolling up. Pat had said that rain was needed very badly, so Mary wondered if this cloud would bring the much-needed rain, or if it would pass them by again. It was an angry-looking cloud, with sharp streaks of lightning flashing from it, and off in the distance could be heard the deep roll of thunder.

As both outfits reached the end of the field nearest the house, they turned around. Mary saw the two men as they stood and looked at the black cloud. They talked together a few minutes, then started unhitching their teams, and all came toward the house on the run. She turned and called to Loretta to come and look, and, as Loretta came up behind her, she asked, "Don't you think that is a funny-looking cloud?"

"Oh, Mom! That's a cyclone cloud! It seems to be about over Regina now. Let's get into the cellar! Where are the girls?" She flew out the door, calling for them to come as fast as they could. They answered her from the granary, which they had made into a playhouse for the summer. "Come here as fast as you can come!" she yelled again, and both girls came flying to her second command.

"What's the matter?" Betty asked, as she saw the frightened look on both their faces.

Mom couldn't seem to answer, so she just pointed to the cloud, but Loretta herded them ahead of her into the house. Pat and Jack had reached the yard, and were unhitching the horses from one another, as quickly as they could. They drove them into the barn, and then they came on the run, Pat yelling all the time, "Into the cellar, all of you! As fast as you can!"

Loretta shoved the girls toward the cellarway, then down the steps; Mary grabbed up Janet and followed her, with Pat and Jack right behind, stumbling down the stairs. Margie started to cry, and Jan sensed something was wrong, so she joined in the crying. Jack had pulled the trapdoor shut behind him, so the cellar was pitch-black. Mary fumbled on the fruit shelves for a

candle, which she knew was there somewhere. Finally her hand closed over it, and she handed it to Pat and said, "Here's a candle, will you light it?"

"Do you suppose it's advisable? Guess I better, though, it will help quiet the children. What a black devil that cloud is! Hope it wears itself out before it reaches here."

The little house creaked and groaned under the force of the wind. Even in the cellar they could hear it. Each one stood tense and listened; then, after what seemed like a year, Jack remarked, "There's the rain now; the wind seems to have died down some. You all wait here, and I'll go take a look." He called back to them, "Yes, it's pretty well over; won't be long until the sun is out again."

The yard was full of puddles from the downpour which had followed the twister. Pat and Jack had eyes for nothing but the fields of wheat. They stood for quite a while and just looked, then Jack said, "It sure seems down pretty badly but, if it isn't broken off, a few hours of sun, and it will stand again."

Pat had a sick look on his face as he pulled on his rubber boots. Mary watched him tramp off across the yard to the fields. She knew he simply must go at once and see; he couldn't wait for the water to soak away. He stood a long time, just looking this way and then that. The sun had come out again, but the air was hot and sticky; it seemed it would rain more before the night was over. The girls were becoming a nuisance, as they begged to go wading, so Mary finally told them to go ahead. As they went outside, Betty called for them to come look at the beautiful rainbow.

"Oh my! Isn't it beautiful?" Mary said, when she came out to view it.

"Is there really a 'pot of gold' at the end of it?" Margie asked.

"No, dear, that is just a fable; but one could almost imagine there might be, when anything is so beautiful," Mom answered her.

As Pat came back into the yard, Mary called to him, "Is the grain in very bad shape?"

"It looks pretty sick, Mary! But I believe it will come up

again, if we don't have another downpour right away to weight it down more." He went on to the barn to give Jack a hand unhitching and unharnessing the horses.

Mary stood and looked at the fields, and her lips moved in prayer, "Please God! Help it to stand tall and straight again; send the warm sunshine to help; send out your power to help! It must not be ruined, as it is needed so badly, not only for the money it will bring, but most of all for Pat. He loves his fields of grain, and tends them with a tender care. It would break his heart if they were ruined. He must have a crop this first year, to build the confidence he will need to face the coming years. Please, dear God," she whispered.

She stood thinking: Yes he will need his confidence and courage too, for she suddenly realized the gamble of it all. This vast country, and its wealth of wheat, could be very unpredictable. So many things could happen in these three short months of June, July, and August, which was really all the summer there was. Would they always be months of worry, after the hard toil?

A late, cold spring could set the wheat back and dwarf it; not enough rain could keep it standing still; too much wind before it was tall enough, and it was simply blown out of the ground; too much rain, and the black and red rust came; a hailstorm could mow it down in an instant; an early frost and it was blighted. One thing after the other; one worry after the other! Was it worth it? She didn't think so, but maybe men felt different; maybe they felt about it the way she felt about the children. The children and home were her care and worry, and the fields and income were Pat's care and worry. Yes, that must be it. She felt quieter now, full of confidence and hope again. Yes, it would work out all right. Prayer was a wonderful thing . . . which reminded her, she hadn't spent too much time lately with the children's prayers and Bible lessons. She made a mental note to start this very evening.

It did not rain again that night, and after a couple of days of hot sunshine the wheat stood tall and straight again.

One hot summer day after the other slipped by and, instead of a green ocean, the fields had turned into an ocean of gold, bending, nodding, swaying, day after day.

In the shade, on the north side of their playhouse, Betty sat, and leaned against the wall. Her eyes were squinted half-shut, and she was looking out over the golden field. Big, white, fleecy clouds floated over it, and she was seeing imaginary castles in the clouds. If you kept your eyes half-closed, you could see all kinds of things in the clouds. Great waterfalls; snowcapped mountains; and when the sun hit the castles just right, they were pink and mauve, and the wheat underneath made them look as if they were set in streets of gold. Betty loved to look at the castles, and could even see herself as a beautiful princess, floating from room to room, and waiting for a handsome prince to come riding on a white charger. He, of course, lived in the neighboring castle. Sometimes she tried to show the castles to Margie, but she would not, or could not, seem to stretch her imagination to see them. In a very down-to-earth manner, she would say, "Betty, you're nuts! Those are just clouds!" When they came into the house after one of these sessions, Margie asked, "Mom, can you see castles in the clouds? Betty says she can, and I think it's nuts!"

"Margie! What a thing to say! You are not to say 'nuts,' it sounds very tough coming from a nice little girl like you," Mom admonished.

"Well, can you?" she asked again.

"Why, I don't know; maybe I can," she replied, and looked at Betty and smiled. She knew she had been sitting weaving her dreams again, and she wondered whether it was a good thing for a child to have such a vivid imagination.

That night, after they had all retired, she said, "Pat, Betty's been seeing her cloud castles again, and I'm wondering if we should forbid her doing that. It's so unreal, and somehow it always upsets Margie, and makes her mad."

"Don't you be saying a thing to her! Life can be dreary enough at times, and especially it can be dull, if one doesn't have a little imagination. Margie would be better off with a bit

more. Life's knocks will be harder for her than Betty, I'm thinking."

"Maybe you're right, dear," Mary admitted, "but imagination was something not allowed in my home. We weren't even permitted to read fairy tales. My father thought such things were pure nonsense. Anything you couldn't actually put your hand on was a fallacy, he always said. I've often wondered, since I've grown up, how he accounted for God . . . yet he was a very religious man."

"Poor old soul, he must be very unhappy," Pat suggested.

"I don't remember if he was unhappy, but I do remember he was very stern. All my laughing has been done since I've known you, Pat. It's been good to laugh, I've found."

"Why, of course it's good to laugh! It's what makes the world go round . . . but we'll be laughing in a queer manner tomorrow if we don't get some sleep tonight."

"Yes, you're right, and you must be very tired, but it just seems we never really have time to talk," she grumbled.

"Well, when we're too old to do anything else, we'll talk for nights on end," he laughed, and pulled her into his arms. "Hey! Don't go pulling away, my sweet! I'm only going to kiss you good night!"

"My dear nitwit!" she whispered, and tucked her head against his shoulder. "See you in the morning, darling!"

The next morning, when breakfast was over, Mary and Loretta stood at the kitchen door for a few minutes and watched the girls. They had a can of oats, and were coaxing one of the colts. Finally Mary remarked, "Pat thinks I'm crazy, but each time I see them playing with those frisky colts, I get gooseflesh all over, for I have visions of them getting kicked or something."

"But Mom, they're such darlings! Look at the way they nuzzle at them. I'm sure they are gentle enough, as long as the girls are never rough with them."

"Maybe," Mary answered, but not too convincingly, as she turned back to the kitchen to prepare Janet's bath. She no sooner got started, and was ready to pick up Jan, than she heard a scream. They both ran outside, and saw the colt as it bolted

around the yard, and behind him flat on her stomach was Margie, as she hung onto the lines for dear life. Mary shouted, "Let go the lines, Margie! Let go, or you'll be killed!"

Around the barn, up over the manure pile went the colt, and smack on top of the manure pile Margie finally loosened her hold on the lines. The colt galloped off to the other end of the pasture, to join its mother.

When they reached Margie, she was moaning and groaning. They managed, between the two of them, to carry her into the house. Her face, arms, and legs were skinned from being dragged over the hard ground. She smelled to high heaven from the manure pile, and it could have been funny, if it wasn't that she might be badly hurt. They quickly undressed her, and bathed her, then felt her over carefully for broken bones; but found none, just bruises and skinned places. Mary applied ointment, and bandaged her up, and she admitted that she felt better.

Betty was standing by, with her face deathly white, and Mary turned on her like a tigress and said, "I've warned and warned about those colts; now if I ever catch either one of you fooling with them again, your Pop is to take his razor-strop to each one of you. I will not caution you again! Margie could very easily have been killed, Betty, and you are usually the instigator of these things. Seems it's never you who gets hurt, always Margie. You understand what I'm saying, don't you, Betty?"

"Yes, Mom, and I'm very sorry," she stammered.

"Well, you just let this be a good lesson to you both, and I repeat, don't let me catch you playing with those colts again!"

Margie was lying on the sofa, looking very much the invalid with all her bandages. Mom told Betty to get some books and read stories to her.

When Pat and Jack came in for dinner, Pat inquired, "What's ailing Margie?"

So Mary repeated the whole episode to him. She expected him to be very stern with the girls, but instead he roared with laughter. He looked at Margie, and said, "A pretty, smelling

mess you must have been. I'll bet it was a sight to see, you wollerin' in that dung-pile!"

"Pat, stop it!" Mary retorted. "How can I discipline the children when you belittle me in front of them? I don't think it's a bit funny, and it certainly isn't a matter to be laughed at lightly. Margie might have been killed."

"Darlin', I'm not belittling you!" he soothed, then added, "It just struck me as very funny. Of course it could have been tragic, but the very fact that it wasn't is all the more reason we should laugh about it."

"Well, it won't be repeated," she snapped at him, "as I've forbidden either one of them to go near those colts again." She was banging dishes of food on the table, and making a great clatter of it all. She knew Pat was right as always, with his laughing ways, but she would not admit it.

"That's pure nonsense, Mary! The girls are the daughters of a farmer, and their lives will be wrapped up in not only colts but all the animals around the farm. They have to be able to manage them, and because one try went wrong does not mean they are not to try again. If they don't conquer that colt, as he gets older he'll get the notion he's the boss, instead of them. Don't you understand, dear?" Pat asked her.

"You're perhaps right," she finally admitted, "but come now and sit down to your dinner, it's getting cold." Then she turned to Margie and asked, "Can you manage to come to the table, or do you want it there on the sofa?"

"I can sit and eat at the table," she answered, and got up slowly; Pat went to help her, and said, "That's my brave baby! You'll be fine in a day or two, won't you? And don't you let that colt, who is a good deal younger than you are, get the upper hand, but in Heaven's name, the next time, don't hang on so long." He laughed, then looked at Betty and asked, "Well, long-face, what ails you?"

"Oh, I feel terrible, Pop, because it was really my fault! You see I'm a good deal older, and I should have tried to drive him, before I let Margie try."

"Well, see that you remember that lesson, then. You have

rather a habit of escaping the brunt of things, I've noticed." He didn't admit it aloud, but inwardly he thought: It's a good trait; she'll always manage to take care of herself. Life will be easier for her than most. Then aloud he said, "After dinner you go catch the colt, and remove the paraphernalia you have on him. He'll get hooked up in the fence or something." Betty wasn't too keen on the job, but she knew she must do it, in order to hold Pop's respect. Then he asked again, "Did you hear what I said, Betty?"

"Yes Pop, I'll take care of it, right after dinner."

As the men got ready to leave the house after dinner, Pat went over beside Mary, and in a low voice said, "Don't be angry with me darlin', for surely you must see that I'm right this time. The girls must be able to handle the animals. They can't be brought up as if they lived in the City."

"I'm not angry at you, Pat! Of course you are right, but it's such a worry; sometimes I think I can't take it any more."

"Darlin' that's the way life is, I guess," he answered, kissed the tip of her nose, then left to join Jack outside.

She turned to Betty, who was helping clear the table, and said, "You go do what Pop asked you to; I'll help Loretta with the dishes today."

Reluctantly Betty left, went down by the windmill, picked up the can of oats, and started for the pasture. It took a great deal of coaxing, but finally the colt stood still, ate the oats, and let Betty remove the makeshift bridle and lines. He nuzzled at her with his nose, and she wasn't afraid of him any more. She decided that tomorrow morning she would drive him herself.

As Mary tackled her work, there was a worried frown upon her forehead, for this morning Pat had gone to town to bring home a new binder. There was no money to pay for it, so it was being bought on time, with promise of payment when the crops were threshed. She did not like unpaid bills, but this time there had been no alternative.

While in town he planned to hire another two men to do the

shocking of the grain, as he and Jack would be busy running the two binders. Both men had been working for almost a week on the old one getting it in shape. They expected to start cutting the summerfallow wheat in the coming week. Mary held her breath each time she looked out over the swaying, golden fields. Pat had shown her the plump, red-brown kernels, and explained how beautifully they were filled out. Surely nothing could spoil it now, but she would not feel easy until it was threshed and either in the granaries or the elevator in town.

Hearing a great clatter, she looked out the window, and saw Pat as he drove in the gate, with the big, shiny new binder. Turning to Loretta she said, "Keep an eye on the bread in the oven, as I'm going out to see the new binder Pat is just bringing in."

"Okay, Mom! You go ahead."

As Mary neared the machineshop, Pat saw her and called, "Hi, sweetheart! Isn't it a beauty? They've sure added a lot of new contraptions since I bought the old one. Have you ever run one like this, Jack?"

Jack looked it over from end to end, then replied, "Yes, it's the same as Dad's new one, and I ran it last season."

"Well, then you're elected to drive it, as I'm more used to that old one." Then he suggested, "You put the team away, will you, Jack?"

After Jack left with the team, Mary asked, "Did you find any men, Pat?"

"I'm in luck, Mary! Funny how luck holds with we Irish. Saw our neighbor Tate in town and he suggested we bring our binders and help him finish his cutting, which will take two or three days more; then he will come here with his three boys and help me get mine done. I hate the few days' delay, but we'll keep our fingers crossed that nothing happens. Doing it that way, there won't be any output of money for stookers. How does it sound to you, Mary?"

"Why, it sounds wonderful! What a nice man he must be to offer the help of four of them, to you two. You'll be getting much the better of the bargain, I'm thinking."

"Oh, there will be lots of ways to return the favor," he assured her, "but right now the most important thing is get the grain cut and stooked."

"Stooked? I thought I just heard you say stookers, too! You mean shocked and shockers, don't you?" Mary asked.

"Oh, hadn't you heard the expression before? It's the same as shocking grain in the States, only here they say stooking, and they don't say bundles of grain here, but sheaves, like in the Bible."

"Stooking for shocking; stoop for a porch; sheaves instead of bundles of grain! Will I ever learn all the different expressions?" she laughed, then exclaimed, "But I like it, Pat! I'm beginning to get it in my blood too, I guess!"

"Gosh! I'm glad, Mary," he said, and gave her one of his special grins, which seemed to caress her from head to toe; then in a half-gruff voice, "You better go back to the house, before I decide to kidnap you, and hide you in the machineshop!"

"Idiot!" she answered, but the word was full of love. She turned and made her way back to the house.

Pat and Jack were four days at the Tates', but this morning they started cutting Pat's summerfallow wheat. When this was finished, they would return to do Mr. Tate's stubble wheat, and feed crops of oats and barley; then back again, to do the same for Pat.

Pat was in high humor when they came to the house for dinner, and he exclaimed to Mary, "Guess what? Tate thinks my summerfallow wheat will run close to sixty bushels to the acre!"

"Oh that can't be right, can it? I never heard of wheat growing that heavy!" Just then Mr. Tate entered the house, and Mary told him and the boys hello.

They acknowledged her greeting, then Mr. Tate said, "I just heard your remark to Pat, Mrs. Mann, and I'm pretty sure the wheat will yield close to those figures. It's much heavier than

mine, and a good No. 1-Northern grade too, big, plump and hard, with no shrivel at all."

"That would certainly be wonderful!" she exclaimed, "we can sure use it this year, can't we, Pat?" He agreed she was more than right about that.

A silent prayer went from Mary, thanking Him for seeing them through this year. It had all been such a gamble, and there was still more waiting to be done, before it was threshed and in the granaries. She hoped with all her heart that the rain and snow would hold off. Each night one went to bed with the thought, I hope it doesn't frost before morning. She came back from her thoughts, and heard Pat as he said, "By the way, Tate, what about these threshing outfits coming in from the west? They say there was a complete drouth out there, and they are moving their outfits this way, trying to make themselves some money. I also heard they are equipped with cook-cars and bunk-houses. Would sure help the womenfolk not to have to cook for those twenty-five or thirty hungry wolves."

"Yes, I've heard about them. Of course they'll charge quite a good deal more, but it would be worth something not to have to feed them, as they practically eat you out of house and home. I sometimes think they try to see how much they really can stow away. I hope before too long to have my own small outfit, and be done with the worry. It's waiting your turn for the threshing-machine to come, and praying the weather will hold out, that gets one all upset each fall."

"Well, it would be all right for you; with your three husky lads you could almost man your own outfit without outside help. In my house, I'm snowed under with womenfolk; but I like it that way, keeps my ego built up," he chuckled.

All during dinner Betty and Curt kept glancing at one another. There were no words between them, except a brief hello when the men came into the house. Betty saw one of Curt's older brothers looking at Loretta as if he'd like to eat her up. She

thought, He better not let Jack catch him, or he'll be sore; but Jack was busy stowing away his food.

When they finished, the men went to sit in the shade of the house for a while, where they dozed and rested. Just before they left for the field again, Pat came in and asked, "Mary, do you suppose you could send something out to the field about three o'clock? Mrs. Tate usually sent sandwiches, cookies, and lemonade. Sure was a lifesaver, I can tell you, just when you feel the lowest."

"I'm certainly glad you told me, Pat, as I wouldn't have thought of it, and I want to do the same as the others in this country. Anyway I feel so grateful to the Tates for helping us out this way. Surely I'll send something; you just run along and leave it to me."

Pat brushed her cheek with a kiss, and left to join the other men. Turning to Loretta, Mary asked, "Did you hear what Pop just said?"

"Yes I did, Mom. Guess we better bake something, as the cookies on hand are rather stale."

"Well, you girls do up the dishes, and I'll make a fresh cake before the fire goes out."

Betty spoke up then, and asked, "Can Loretta take it out?"

"It will take two of you to carry it," Mom told her, then added in a teasing voice, "Anyway, Curt will be glad to see you, and the one who was looking at Loretta as if he'd like to eat her up will be more than glad to see her, I'm sure," and Mom laughed as she started to get things ready for her cake.

"You forget, I'm mad at Curt, for picking that fight at school," Betty retorted, "so Margie can help Loretta carry it."

Margie spoke up then, and said, "I don't want to go, Mom, as I've got other things to do."

"For instance, what?" Mom questioned.

"Well, I've got to get five more gopher tails to complete another hundred; then that will make six hundred altogether. I want to turn them in Saturday night and get my money."

"Oh, a business woman, eh?" Mom teased. "All right, you go ahead, Betty and Loretta can manage the lunch. By the way, what are you going to do with all that money?"

"There are several things, but guess I'll buy a saddle for Puck."

"But darling, a saddle costs a great deal of money, and anyway Puck's a pacer, you can't ride him," she protested.

"I know where I can get the saddle," she replied with an air, "and I like to ride Puck, but it will be easier with a saddle."

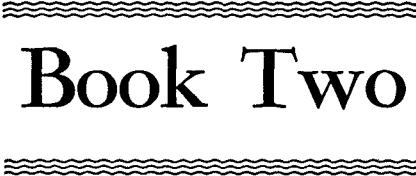
Pat had been to an auction, a few weeks back, and he picked up the old nag for fifteen dollars. He thought he was old enough, and gentle enough for the girls to drive to school. Margie had fallen in love with the horse immediately, but he was too mild to interest Betty much. The poor old thing had been thin and miserable when Pat brought him home, but with Margie's pampering he had filled out nicely. He had a worried look on his old face, and a constant pucker between his eyes, so they had named him Pucker, now shortened to Puck.

The threshing-machine, with its boisterous outfit, came a few weeks later. The summerfallow wheat went about fifty-eight bushels to the acre, and the stubble wheat was close to thirty-seven, so it was a bumper crop.

After the outfit left, Pat and Jack were busy as they hauled the green feed. The big mow was packed to capacity, and what was left over was in neat stacks behind the barn. Then for days they were hauling grain and putting it in the elevator in town. Rushing! rushing! to be done before the snow came.

Jack had promised to come back next year and work for Pat again, but he was going home to his dad's for the winter. The granary where he had slept was full of grain now, and he had to sleep on the sofa in the living-room. It was far too small and cramped for his height. He had got almost as tall as Pat this summer.

The girls were back in school, and everything seemed to be running along peacefully for them. Mom and Loretta had great plans for sewing and fancy-work to be done during the long winter months. Little Jan could sit up by herself, and was even trying to crawl. Pat built her a playpen up off the floor, away from the cold drafts, which would start in earnest soon.



Book Two

SPRING! . . . SUMMER! . . . FALL! . . . WINTER! . . . and again SPRING! . . . SUMMER! . . . FALL! Almost two years had elapsed! Now, in September 1914, Canadians looked back on two hectic months. What a grim day August 4 had been. That was the day Britain declared war on Germany, and allied herself with France and Russia. Canada immediately called a special session, and agreed to join her Mother England in the struggle. Recruiting started at once, and the response came beyond all expectations. An army of fifty thousand men had been raised, and thirty thousand had already gone overseas, in two short months. One million bags of flour were sent to England as a gift. The prairie farmers were proud of that; each felt almost as if it were his own special donation.

Everyone in the Mann household had changed. Betty was now fourteen, and fast becoming a grown-up young lady. She was in her first year of high school, as she had passed her grade-eight examination last June. Margie was eleven, tall for her age, and she had lost all her chubbiness. Little Janet was facing her third birthday, and was a source of delight to everyone; full of mischief and into everything. Loretta was nearing her seventeenth birthday, and she got prettier each day. Jack, just twenty-one, was courting her in his best grown-up manner. He was

talking enlistment, and also marriage, but Mary and Pat had refused to give their consent for Loretta to marry for another year or so, and should Jack enlist, they thought it best to wait until he returned. The two years had rested lightly upon Mary and Pat. They did not look any older, and still bickered back and forth like two sweethearts.

Things had been working out beautifully, and all the way around, the crops were good, although they never did hit the peak of that first year. There was money in the bank now and, especially to Mary, that was a wonderful feeling, because of the sense of security which came with it.

Pat and Jack were busy doing up the regular odds and ends of jobs which came with every fall. The threshing was finished, and they would start to haul the wheat away soon. Mary had been watching Pat for the past few weeks. He had that tenseness about him which she recognized. His old restlessness coming back. The feeling that he must go out and conquer new fields. She knew the explanation would come soon, and it did a few days later.

It was during breakfast time, and Pat said, "Mary, I'm riding down east of Regina today, with Jack's father. It's about a forty-mile trip from Regina, I'd say. He has to go down that way on business." He hesitated, then added, "There's a farm up for sale down there, and it sounds real good."

She knew this was going to come sooner or later, so she asked, "Are you thinking of buying a place, Pat?"

"Well, yes, I am," he answered, then quickly added, "You've always been preaching that we must eventually put down some roots in a place, and stay put. I figure, if I can find the right place, this fall is the time when there is really going to be enough cash to do it."

"But Pat, the grain isn't even in the elevators yet; maybe the price will be so low that we won't make much from our share of the crop."

"Our share of the crop! That's the secret of the whole shebang! I'm sick and tired of working like a slave, and only getting a share for my efforts!"

"All right, Pat! You don't need to get so excited! Of course it is what you should do, but what I'm wondering is this the time to do it? Maybe we should wait another year or so, until we are in a still better position."

"Well, yes, it is a chance," he answered more quietly, "but this place sounds so interesting; and Mary! . . . there are trees down there! I know you hate this open prairie."

"No, I don't really hate it, Pat; it's just that it seems so big. It makes one feel insignificant."

Pat felt the tenseness leave the conversation, so he asked, "You don't really mind if I go look at it, do you, dear?"

"No, Pat, you go ahead. As usual I'm making mountains out of molehills; maybe you won't even like it."

They were alone, for during the conversation Jack had excused himself and left for the barn; Loretta made an excuse, too, that she had something to attend to outside; and the children had left for school. Pat looked at her and gave her a wide grin, then got up and walked around the table to her side. He leaned down and kissed her, and whispered, "My good girl! Right now I feel like I could turn the world upside down for you, if that should be what you really wanted. You're always so understanding, darlin'." He straightened, and added, "Guess I better be getting my clothes changed, as Jack's father will be along any minute now."

Pat was still upstairs, dressing, when Mary heard an auto pull into the yard. Jack came from the barn to tell his dad hello, and then brought him on into the house. As they entered the kitchen, Jack said, "Mrs. Mann, I want you to meet my father, Mr. Carroll! And Dad, this is Miss Loretta Grey!"

"How do you do!" he greeted them, then said, "I've been wanting to meet you both for a long while. May I thank you, Mrs. Mann, for being so good to my boy? And Miss Grey, you are as pretty as Jack has told us."

Mary led the way into the sitting-room, and asked him to be seated, also thanked him for being so gracious, as, she assured him, it was no effort at all to be nice to Jack.

Loretta stood in the kitchen, and looked after Jack's retreat-

ing back; her face was flushed and her usually calm blue eyes were smoldering black. Feeling her gaze, he glanced over his shoulder and grinned, then said, "I meant it, my lassie! I'm not being fresh, for you are beautiful!" Then he went on into the other room. The ready retort died on her lips; a wonderful thrill went through her, and she thought, Maybe he does love me, as much as he says he does.

Jack turned to his dad and said, "I'm going to run on about my work. Pat will be ready any minute now. You two have a good day, and I hope you get that job you are after in Qu'Appelle."

"Thanks, Jack! Will Mother and I see you Sunday?" Then, before Jack could answer, he added, "Bring Miss Grey over to dinner with you; Mother's been dying to meet her."

"Okay, I'll be over, and I'll ask Loretta if she would like to come too. Bye for now, and I'll see you Sunday!" As he passed through the kitchen again, he said to Loretta, "I've got things to talk to you about this evening, beautiful!"

"Impudence! That's what it is," Loretta mumbled to herself. "He's catching Pop's blarney . . . but I like it!"

Pat came downstairs, and immediately he and Mr. Carroll prepared to leave. Mary followed them out to the auto, and as Pat got ready to crank the machine she cautioned, "Pat, don't forget to use your best business ability, even though you like the place ever so much. Don't pay too much."

"You don't need to worry, Mary, I wouldn't give my final word without your acceptance too," he assured her.

Mr. Carroll was behind the wheel; he signaled he was ready; Pat turned it over; and the auto came to life. He jumped in and they were off, waving good-bye to Mary as they left the yard.

After they left Regina, they drove east, and had covered about twenty more miles, when Pat suddenly became aware of bluffs on either side of the road, and scattered here and there over the fields. He turned to Mr. Carroll, and remarked, "Mary's right, trees are nice. They make one feel peaceful and friendly inside. Maybe that's not the way to say it, but they do make one feel differently somehow."

"They do at that, don't they?" Mr. Carroll agreed. "But I think women like them especially well. Mrs. Carroll has always said that she enjoys this particular part of the country, and really that is one of the reasons I'm trying to get this elevator job, down this way."

"As long as it's what you want, I sure hope that you get it," Pat encouraged, "and I don't see any reason why you shouldn't, as you have all the experience necessary."

Later, when they arrived in Qu'Appelle, Mr. Carroll soon located the man he wished to see. They talked for about an hour, and at the end of that time he had his job.

He suggested to Pat that they find a place to eat, and then drive out to the farm he wished to see. It was a small town, with its business houses mostly all located on the main street—and, as in most small towns, this was called Main Street. A shop where farm implements were repaired and new ones were sold; a post office; a bank; a couple of stores where one bought dry goods, groceries, or practically anything; a barbershop; a drugstore; and a hotel with dining-room service—neither rooms nor meals too highly recommended. Farther up the street, a confectionery store; a Chinese restaurant; a Chinese laundry; and other small shops here and there.

Pat and Mr. Carroll decided on the Chinese restaurant, and enjoyed a not-half-bad meal, and cheap, too. Seated again in the auto, they left the center of the town and drove north out the main highway. On their way they passed a nice school, two or three churches, and then several residences.

"It's a nice little town," Pat said, as he looked to right and left. "The sort of place you would like to have your kids grow up in. I'm sure Mary will like it too, as she's a stickler for nice things. I just hope the farm lives up to my expectations."

They rode for several miles in silence, and then Mr. Carroll asked, "What were the directions the man gave you Pat? Seems to me we've gone about far enough north."

"From his description, I would say that next corner is where we are to turn west," Pat answered. They turned west at the corner, and bumped along a narrow, dirt road for some time,

then Pat spied elevators in the distance. As he pointed to them, he remarked, "That must be Hillsby, so I guess we better turn north at this corner."

After they had covered about a mile, they decided to drive into the next farmhouse for help in locating the Smithers farm. A woman answered Pat's rap and, in a very friendly way, told him, "You continue right on north for about another half-mile; cross the coulee bridge, then turn right at the first gate." Pat thanked her, and they proceeded as they were directed.

As they crossed the coulee bridge, Pat discovered a stream of fresh water meandering here and there through the trees. Fairly good-sized hills were on either side, thickly covered with shrubs and trees.

They came to a gate; Pat got out and opened it, and then he closed it again, after Mr. Carroll drove through. They followed the road beside the coulee for perhaps a quarter of a mile; then, as the auto rounded a curve, they suddenly came upon the buildings. Set in a hollow, they had a comfortable look, as if they had stood there for a long time. A low, rambling house apparently had been added to several times; perhaps as the family grew new rooms were put on to accommodate. Pat knew that this used to be the custom, especially when everyone had large families. Quite a distance from the house was a barn and any number of other buildings. Everything had a gray look, but Pat thought to himself: It's nothing a few cans of fresh paint won't cure.

Mr. Carroll stopped the auto near the path leading to the house and, as Pat prepared to go in, a tall, thin man emerged from the granary near by. He was covered with a gray dust, as if he had been fanning grain. He lifted his hand in greeting and called, "Hallo! Did you want something?"

Pat walked to meet him and asked, "Are you Mr. Smithers?"

"That I am," he replied. "What can I do for you?"

"I heard this place is for sale, and thought I'd like to take a look around . . . if I might," Pat answered.

"Yes, it's for sale; you see, my health is failing me, and I thought I'd best go back to England and be among my relatives again. Anyway, my wife has always wanted to go back, as she

never has settled herself here, even though we've stayed over eighteen years."

"I'm sorry that you're not well," Pat offered, "but maybe your loss will be my gain. When it comes right down to facts, I guess we're all trying to please our women. Now my wife has her heart set on living where there are trees. We live up on the prairie, west of Regina, and though she never says much, I know she really hates it."

"Yes, I guess you may be right at that. By the way, what's your name?" Smithers then asked.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Smithers! My name is Mann, Patrick Mann, and this is Mr. Stanley Carroll, who is going to take over the operation of one of the grain elevators in Qu'Appelle."

Smithers acknowledged the introduction, then suggested they take a look around. He led the way back to the granary, and explained that he had been fanning grain when they had driven up. As they entered, he added, "The wheat this year was a good grade, but full of wild oats, so I thought maybe if I cleaned some of it I might be able to sell it to the new owner for seed."

Pat walked over to the bin, and picked up a handful. Yes, the wheat was a fairly good quality, but full of wild oats, and mustard too, which was going to mean a lot of hard work, getting the land free of all those weeds. As he looked around, he saw that the granary was a two-story affair. Smithers suggested they go upstairs, and Pat found four good-sized bins on the second floor. When they came back to the main floor, Pat inquired, "How many field granaries do you have?"

"Well, let's see . . . there are six, I guess, but they need repairs pretty badly. I haven't felt up to much work this past year, and with so many men gone off to war, I wasn't able to get much help of any kind."

Pat agreed with him that help was really becoming a problem where the farmer was concerned.

They left the granary, and strolled to the chickenhouse. A good grade of chickens, Pat decided, but Mary would sure be busy with the louse powder if they were hers. The poor, neglected

things were in pretty bad shape. On up over the hill, they came to the hogpens and sheds. Ye gods! What a stench! I would sure have to fumigate those before I could use them; or maybe, better still, set a match to the whole shebang! Pat thought, and he decided, then and there, he didn't want any of Smithers' hogs.

Farther up the hill, they came to the barns; not much like the large, red ones around Coulee Hill, but Pat could see possibilities in them anyway. The cow barn was a long, lean-to affair connected to the regular barn. It had stalls for about fourteen cows, and a large pen at the back for calves. Everything was in a disreputable state, with doors sagging, windowpanes missing, boards out of mangers everywhere. He could see a pile of work to be done. However, the horse barn was in fairly good shape, and much more roomy than it had looked from the outside. Beside the barn was a manure pile, which must have been stacking up for over ten years, at least. Pat eyed it and thought: It will take a year to rid myself of that eyesore, but more than likely the land can stand the extra fertilizer, and a good deal of it can be burned!

They made their way over to the machine shop and blacksmith shop, then strolled toward the house, and on the way Pat noticed a small smokehouse and woodshed. He turned to Smithers and asked, "How about the wood situation on the place? Is there plenty?"

"Yes, if you are careful and preserve your trees you'll find you have more than enough," he answered, and, as they were near the house, he suggested they go on in and look it over.

"Good idea!" Pat remarked, then laughed and said, "My life wouldn't be worth much if I went home without an accurate account of the house. Afraid my wife wouldn't stand for that!"

"Well, come on in and meet the little woman, and she'll show you around," Smithers said as he opened the door.

A washed-out dumpy blonde came forward to meet them, and acknowledged the introductions in a real cockney accent; however, she was courteous and anxious to show all the good points of the house. She explained to them that they were now in the part used as a summer kitchen. It was a good-sized room,

with an east and west door which would give a good cross-ventilation, a boon for hot summer days! Then Mrs. Smithers opened the door which led into the main part of the house, and Pat found himself in a large, cool, shaded room. As his eyes adjusted themselves, he could see that this was the main kitchen and dining-room. There were a good number of windows, shaded by a verandah. He walked over and looked out. He saw that the verandah had been covered with creepers and rambler roses, but the early frosts made them pretty sick-looking now. However, he exclaimed, "Gosh! Mrs. Mann would certainly enjoy that nice shady porch during summer!"

"Yes, it is nice," Mrs. Smithers admitted, "and I often sit there with my sewing, as it is always cool on summer afternoons."

They moved to continue their inspection, and entered a hallway, with stairs leading to the second floor; off this was a door to a large parlor. The south wall of the parlor had a big, bay window, and Pat thought: Ideal place for Mary's plants. The upstairs was roomy too, with four good-sized bedrooms. Of course the eaves sloped down in them, but it gave a quaint, old, country appearance to each room. There were unexpected closets and cubbyholes everywhere. The more Pat saw, the more excited he became, but he sensed Mr. Carroll's restlessness, and, looking at his watch, he saw that they had been roaming over the house and talking for almost an hour. They must be getting started back to Coulee Hill, or it would be all hours before they got there. He said, "Well, I think we had better take a quick run over the fields, and then we must be on our way home."

Mr. Carroll agreed, then added, "I'm not too sure about those lights on the auto, and it gets dark so much earlier now, so we had better get on our way as soon as possible."

Pat turned to Mrs. Smithers and thanked her for her trouble in showing them the house, then said, "I'm sure Mrs. Mann will like the house; I like what I've seen so far, and now we shall see how the fields stand inspection."

Smithers got into the auto with them, and pointed for Mr. Carroll to follow the road east past the barn; then he said, "I doubt we can make it all the way around in the auto, for the

roads aren't very good. We'll go as far as we can, though." He hesitated, then went on to explain, "Now this road goes right through the middle of the section; one half lies on each side. The road is supposed to go straight through to the main highway on the east, but it runs through a bluff, and this summer's rains washed the culvert out, . . . and to tell you the truth I haven't felt equal to repairing it, so I know we won't be able to go all the way through there."

Pat's eyes roved to the right and left, as he tried to take everything in. To the south, he saw that half was divided into two pieces; one part had carried stubble wheat this year, and the other the green feed-crops. To the north was a large, fairly flat field, in pretty good shape for next year's summerfallow; and east of it was a field which had carried this year's summerfallow wheat. They had reached the place where the road was bad, so Pat suggested he get out and walk the rest of the way. He roamed about for quite a while, then returned to the auto. As he came up he said, "Yes, I like what I see, but it's sure dirty, Smithers; it will take a lot of hard work to get it in shape again. However, I see your fences are in good shape."

"There's plenty of feed for the stock, so they don't need to break down fences to find something to eat. That coulee you came by on your way in is a wonderful place for them to feed. My stock graze there the better part of the summer, and the bluffs in the fields hold them over . . . that is, after the crops are off."

When they arrived back in the yard, Pat said, "We better not take time to go over the coulee; I'll take your word for it, Smithers. What I want to know now is the price and the terms."

"Well, the place is valued at twenty thousand; I've got eight thousand in it, and the mortgage company holds a ten-thousand mortgage against it." He hesitated, then added, "I'll take eight thousand cash, and you assume the note with the mortgage company. I won't be making any profit, but I'll be glad to break out even. Doing it that way, you will be saving two thousand on the deal, as I'm pretty sure, if the loan company takes it over,

they'll hold it at twenty thousand and maybe even twenty-two thousand."

"Eighteen thousand dollars is a great deal of money! I don't know . . ." and Pat hesitated. "I wouldn't want to make a deal right now, as naturally I shall want to talk it over with Mrs. Mann. What do you say I drop you a card, if I decide to go any farther with it, and then we can make a date to meet at the mortgage company, or they can send a man down, and we can meet at your bank here. Where do you do business, at Qu'Appelle or Hillsby?"

"I transact all my business at Hillsby; it's a small place, but I like the way they handle things over there. That's where my mail comes, too," he replied. "I know you want time to make up your mind and all, but I wouldn't wait too long, as several people are interested. I know you will like the place. I'm sorry it's so run down, but I just couldn't seem to be equal to all the work lately."

"Well, then, we'll leave it that way," Pat suggested, "and I'll drop you a line within the next few days." He turned to Mr. Carroll and said, "If you'll fix the spark and gas, I'll crank her up, and we'll be on our way home. Thanks again, Smithers, for your trouble in showing us around, and I hope I'll be able to see my way clear to see you soon."

Mr. Carroll steered the auto out of the yard, and onto the winding road by the coulee. Pat strained his neck as far as possible, trying to get a good look at the coulee pasture. After Pat closed the road gate and got back into the car, Mr. Carroll asked, "Well, Pat! What is your verdict on the place?"

"I like it! Fact of the matter, I'm sold on it, even if it is in a pretty rundown condition. It really has wonderful possibilities, and then there's a sort of peaceful atmosphere about it somehow."

"Yes, I felt that too, Pat," Mr. Carroll answered, "but it's a pretty steep price, I think. It's all it's worth, and some more, I should say."

"Well, I imagine some shaving can be done, when one gets down to real business. Smithers is going to have to leave there, whether he gets his eight thousand cash or less. His health

won't permit him to do otherwise, and if it don't stop him, his wife will," Pat suggested, "you wait and see if I'm not right."

"Hope so, for your sake, Pat, as I can see you've really fallen for the place; then, if Jack doesn't get too strong an urge to join up, you've got help for this winter anyway, to get things in shape, as he is pretty handy."

"Jack's a good boy, Mr. Carroll," he admitted, "and, as you say, unless he enlists, he'll stay pretty close, at least as long as Loretta is around."

The rest of the journey home was practically done in silence, each man busy with his own thoughts of the day's happenings. Everything was in darkness when they pulled into the yard. Pat told Mr. Carroll good night, after he thanked him over and over for his kindness in driving him around and then waiting so long for him.

"Oh, that's okay, Pat!" he said. "Let me know if you decide to take the place, and I'll drive you to meet your men. If you're to meet at Hillsby, we'll plan to take the womenfolk along, and that will give Mrs. Mann an opportunity to see the place, before you add your final 'John Henry' to the deal. And, by the way, how about dropping the 'Mister,' and calling me Stan?"

"You're what I'd call a real friend!" Pat replied, then again he said, "Thanks for everything . . . Stan!"

"Fine, Pat! And I'll see you soon." He turned the auto around, and disappeared toward the road.

Pat entered the kitchen door, and started tiptoeing toward the stairway. Suddenly his foot came in contact with something that moved. He nearly lost his balance, but managed to right himself. Cursing under his breath, he reached down, and his hand closed over one of Jan's toys. He felt his way cautiously now, and finally got to the stairway. As he opened the door and looked up, he saw a light burning, and when he entered the bedroom he found Mary sitting up in bed. He leaned across and kissed her, then exclaimed, "What did you do, set a trap for me so I'd be sure to awaken you?"

"Why, what happened?" she giggled, as she saw the toy wagon still in his hand.

He shoved the hand holding the wagon out at her, and hissed, "Didn't you know people can kill themselves on these damn things?"

"Hush, dear! You'll have the entire house awake!" Mary whispered. "Didn't you have a good day? Is that why you're so cross?"

He calmed down immediately and, as he started to undress, he exclaimed, "A good day? Wait until you hear the whole thing!"

"Well, just relate the highlights now," she suggested, "otherwise we'll have the girls awake."

He blew out the lamp, and as he got into bed he said, "You'll love the place, dear. It's pretty run down and all, but still I just know that you will love it! Damn it, woman! I can't even mention the word love with you so close! Come on over here on my arm, and we'll talk about the place tomorrow. Who cares about farms, and whatnot?" he whispered, as he pressed her close against him.

"But Pat, please!" she said, and tried to pull herself free. "You'll waken the kids, for sure!"

"You've been telling me I'm going to waken those kids for the past fourteen years, and I never have yet!" Then he coaxed, "Please, colleen, come back on my arm; I just want to cuddle you close to me, is all."

Mary moved toward him, then tucked her head under his ear and whispered, "I love you so much, darling, I really don't know why I'm always fighting you off."

"Good girl! That's more like my sweetheart. You can fight just as much as you please, dear, just so long as you always come back into my arms again," he told her, and punctuated each word with a kiss.

Soon there was the deep, peaceful breathing of two people fast asleep, and all else was stillness. But not so the following morning at breakfast. The girls were all excited, and asking questions at forty miles an hour, as they tried to find out everything about the farm Pop went to see.

"How far is it from the school, Pop?" Margie asked.

"Is it close to town, and to high school?" Betty put in.

"Hey, listen, one at a time, please!" Pop yelled at them. "First I passed a country school, about a mile from the farm. That answers you, Margie! And Betty, there was a high school in Qu'Appelle, that's about eight miles away, but there may be one at Hillsby, and that's less than three miles from the farm, but I wasn't in Hillsby, so don't know about that."

"Is it a pretty place, Pop? Can we each have our own bedroom?" Betty continued to ply him with questions.

"Now, listen! You kids better start on your way to school; I'll just tell Mom and the rest the highlights, and save all the details until tonight, then we can thresh it over thoroughly. How's that?" Pat asked them.

"That'll be fine, Pop!" Margie answered. "Come on, Betty! Let's go; we'll sure have to hurry now."

They kissed Mom and Pop, told Jan and the others so long, and off they went to school.

As they left, Mary heaved a sigh, and said, "Loretta dear, bring me some hot coffee; maybe now I can drink it in peace."

"Please, Mommy, can I go out to play?" little Jan lisped.

"Yes, darling, you can," and Mary untied her bib and helped her down from her high chair, then cautioned, "Just play around the house, sweet."

"O-tay Mommy!" she called over her shoulder.

"Okay, indeed! Don't take them long to pick up expressions, does it?" Pat asked, and laughed over it.

Jack and Loretta started to leave the table, but Mary said, "Oh, sit still, kids! Let's be real lazy for once, and listen to Pat tell about the place he saw yesterday. After all, you two will live there too, you know. Listen to me talk, I better wait until I've heard something about it myself before I become so positive, eh?"

"Don't worry, Mary, you will like it, I know," Pat answered, then started to relate the whole day to them. He became so excited about it all, and told it so graphically, they could almost imagine they were there.

"It sounds wonderfull" Loretta spoke up first.

"It sure does," Jack offered, then added, "I'm so glad, too, that Dad got his job down there. Maybe now he'll sell this farm, and just look after one job from now on. Even though he has this one rented, he's always there poking around at something; and he's getting too old to try holding down two jobs."

Mary sat very quiet, with a dreamy, faraway look in her eyes. Suddenly the expression changed, and she turned to Pat and demanded, "Patrick Mann! Here you've been raving and ranting on, filling us full of all the lovely things, and not one single, solitary word of what all this is going to cost; and it will cost plenty, from all the rosy accounts you've given. What is the price, anyway?"

"It's plenty, darlin'," he said, hesitating, then finally adding, "but I'm sure the price can be cut some, as Smithers is a sick man, and he is going to have to leave there one way or the other. The price is set at twenty thousand, but . . ."

"Twenty thousand? Are you crazy, Pat?" Mary almost screamed, she was so taken aback with such a tremendous figure.

"Well, wait until I finish, dear," Pat suggested. "Smithers has eight thousand in the place, and the mortgage company holds a mortgage of ten thousand . . . that makes eighteen thousand, and I'm sure I can talk them out of another two and maybe even three thousand. I figure I should be able to get by with an outlay of about five thousand cash, and the balance on crop-percentage payments. We can swing it, I just know we can!"

"Gosh damn it, Pat! You're . . . you're . . . oh, I don't know," Mary finally gave up in exasperation. She turned to Loretta and Jack and said, "I'm sorry! Please excuse me, kids!"

"Oh that's all right, Mom," Loretta assured her.

Pat was sitting with a dazed expression on his face, after Mary's last outburst. She looked at him, then suddenly she smiled and said, "Oh, Pat darling! Please forgive me for hollering, and making such a scene; but it seems such a tremendous amount of money. I can see, though, you are terribly set on it, and if we can talk the price down, as you say, well then, let's do it!"

His face lit up immediately, and he asked, "Do you really mean it, Mary?"

"Yes I do, I guess, for your hunches are nearly always right, so we'll just take this one in our stride, too."

Then he suggested, "Of course, it means lots of hard work, and scrimping too; but it should be worth it, as eventually it will be our own." He turned to Loretta and asked, "What is your opinion, dear? Yours too, Jack?"

Jack replied first, and said, "It's a chance one always has to take here in this country. You never really know what the crop will do, until it is safe in the granaries."

"I feel like Mom does," Loretta put in. "It's a big gamble, but like she says, if you think you can swing it, I'll help all I possibly can, for where would I be, if it weren't for you two?"

Pat and Mary looked at her, and saw tears in her eyes. "Golly!" Pat put in hurriedly, "don't turn on the weeps. We love you as much as the other three and, don't worry, we expect just as much from you in return . . . so guess that's kind of an even bargain all the way around, eh?"

Mary suggested then that Pat decide when he wanted to make the trip down to close the deal, and for him to write his man the date he decided on, but to allow time for Smithers to contact the mortgage company, so they could have someone present, too.

Jack spoke up, after they had all agreed on a date, and said, "I'll see if Dad will be able to drive you down that day; you said he offered to do so, didn't you?"

"Yes he did, Jack, but if it isn't convenient on that day, tell him Mary and I can take the train down."

"Well then, we better stir ourselves from this table, or it is going to be dinner time before the breakfast dishes are done," Mary put in, "and Pat, as soon as we've cleared the table I'll bring the writing materials, and you get your letter written; then someone will have to go into town and mail it."

"If you like, Pop, I'll ride Ponto in after dinner and mail it," Loretta offered.

"That'll be fine, dear, but you better ride Jerry or Puck, as Ponto is pretty fresh for a beginner like you. I even worry when Betty rides him, but she seems to be able to handle him pretty

good." Ponto had been Betty's birthday gift this fall, from Mom and Pop. She had been thrilled beyond words with the fresh, frisky Indian pinto.

Several days later, on a brisk, sunny morning, an auto was making its way toward Hillsby, and seated in it were Mr. and Mrs. Carroll, and Mary and Pat. They were on their way to complete final arrangements for the purchase of the Smithers farm, and Mary was becoming more and more enthusiastic each mile. They were going by the farm first to pick up the Smitherses, and take them to the bank with them. They bumped along the dirt road and in no time at all the auto was on the coulee road on the way to the house, so Pat turned around to watch Mary in the back seat. She was just looking and looking from one side to the other, and there was a rapt expression on her face.

"Well, darlin'?" he finally queried.

"Oh, Pat! It's wonderful! It's beautiful! It's everything you said, and more, I think. Those lovely trees, and that delightful little stream! How I'm going to enjoy strolls down there!" She gasped as they rounded the corner into the yard, "Oh! How peaceful and contented everything looks. Yes, the buildings do need brightening up, but some paint will fix that, and how we'll love doing it, knowing it's our very own."

"I told you," Pat answered with a know-it-all look on his face.

"Yes, I have to admit you were certainly right, dear, but gosh, I'm afraid I'm going to get lost in such a large house, after the four tiny rooms we've been living in."

"You'll manage, my dear," Mrs. Carroll put in, "I don't think there ever was a house too big for a woman. Now myself, it seems every corner was just made for something, and if I don't happen to have it, I can very soon think of something I must buy for it."

They inspected the house rather quickly, as their time was short, then took the Smitherses with them and left for the bank. The deal was soon closed to everyone's satisfaction. Mr. and Mrs. Smithers would not lower the price below six thousand, but they did agree to take four thousand cash, and the balance in yearly payments. The mortgage company seemed glad to have new blood on the place, and they were especially pleased when

Pat handed them a thousand dollars against their debt, so they made concessions, too. Mary and Pat were quite satisfied all the way around.

They drove back to the farm to take the Smithers home, and upon arrival Mrs. Smithers insisted they come in and have tea. Mary tried to make an excuse, saying that it would be too much trouble, but Mrs. Smithers informed them it was no trouble at all, and anyway she wanted to do it. While they were eating cake, and drinking the tea, Pat asked, "How soon do you suppose you can have your auction, and dispose of your things?"

"Well, let's see . . . this is the 25th of September. I think I should be able to get my things together and be ready to leave here in about three weeks." He got up and walked over to look at the calendar, then asked, "What do you say to taking possession October 15? That will give you some time to get settled, before real winter sets in."

"That sounds fair enough," Pat agreed, "as I would like to get moved as early as possible, so we'll leave it that way, and I'll plan to get my things down here by the 15th. Now, I think, if there isn't anything else we should be starting back. Anyway, you want to stop in Qu'Appelle, don't you, Stan?"

"Yes I do, Pat, as Mrs. Carroll hasn't seen the house I rented there yet, and I imagine you want to stop, don't you, Kitty?"

"Certainly I want to see it, Stan, so I can plan what furniture to bring along with us," she assured him.

They bid the Smitherses good-bye, and wished them a safe crossing, also that Mr. Smithers would enjoy better health over there. Mary remarked, "I hope you escape all the submarines; it's a pretty dangerous time to be traveling on the ocean."

"Oh, we'll manage," Mrs. Smithers assured her, "and there'll be so many things to do over there to help. Here one feels so far away and useless."

When they drove out of the yard, Mary said, "England is the place for her. I'll bet she always felt useless here; poor thing has perhaps never been able to adjust herself. I've heard that so often happens to English women when they come out to the

prairies. She will be happy back there, but I'm not so sure about him."

As they drove into the main street of Qu'Appelle, Mary immediately fell in love with the little town. She and Pat waited in the auto, while Kitty and Stan went in to inspect their house. When they were all in the auto again, and on their way home, Pat remarked, "Well this will likely be our last trip to Coulee Hill, and the place we now call home."

"Yes," Mary agreed, "and I doubt we ever lived anywhere so long, and had so few real, close friends. Of course, I'll hate to leave the Tates, as they are lovely people; then there's you folks . . . but gosh, you're coming with us, aren't you? It's going to be nice having someone we know in a new place."

"That is the way I feel, too," Mrs. Carroll said. "I haven't actually known you, only through Jack, but right from this morning I've felt like we were old friends."

"Thank you very much," Mary replied, then added, "We'll have to see that we make up for lost time, from now on."

The next three weeks were really hectic. Packing was going on during the days, and half the nights. Margie and Betty could hardly stand it until it would be time for them to see their new home. Arrangements had been made for a freight car to take the cattle and other small stock; also the household effects. Betty, Loretta, and Jack were going to drive the horses down the highway. They were taking the two saddle-ponies, and the driving team in the democrat; then if one of them got tired of the saddle he could ride in it for a while.

Loretta laughed and said, "I'll likely spend most of my time in the democrat; maybe I better add some cushions, too."

"You're doing fine with your riding," Betty encouraged, "won't be long until you're as good as anyone else."

"Thanks, Betts, but I can still stand improvement. The main thing seems to be the stamina to stand up to it for any period of time. I get so darn tired after I ride a little while."

"I don't see why the heck I can't go too!" Margie put in. "I ride better than either one of them."

Mary looked at Pat for an answer to that one. He said, "Now, kitten, put your claws away, for who the dickens is going to help Mom and Janet, if you go with them?"

She hesitated a moment, then pleaded, "I'm sorry, Mom! I forgot you two were going to be alone. Of course I'll go with you! When do we leave? When they do?"

"No, dear, I promised Mrs. Tate we would stay with her for three days, as that will give Pop and the girls time to get things out to the farm, and partially settled."

"Oh, heck! Do we have to stay three whole days? Anyway, it should be Betty who's going there; Curt's sweet on her, not me!"

"Hush, dear!" Mom admonished her. "We'll not talk any more about it," and Margie realized, from the tone she used, that the subject was closed.

The morning of the 14th was bright with early sunshine, but with a decided nip in the air; a real fall day. Everyone had been up since long before daylight, and now they were almost ready to leave. Betty was astride Ponto; Jack on Jerry; and Loretta was seated in the democrat. All the horses were in the yard, ready to be driven out the gate. Pat spoke up and said, "Remember, and don't drive them too hard, as it is going to be a long jaunt; the colts will tire much more quickly than the older horses, so take it easy on them. They'll be pretty hard to handle for the first hour, but after that they'll settle to a steady gait. When you get to Hillsby, put them in the corral, and then you get rooms at the hotel for the night. I'll be there in the morning with the rest of the things."

"Okay, Pat! We'll do the best we possibly can with them, and we'll see you tomorrow," Jack answered him.

Suddenly Mary exclaimed, "Oh! Wait a minute! You've forgotten the box of food! Now wouldn't that have been a fine how do you do, all day and nothing to eat!" She rushed back into the house, picked the box up, and returned to the democrat with it. She placed it under the seat and pulled a blanket over it. Then in a low voice she said to Loretta, "I'm depending on

you to see nothing happens. Please be careful, dear! These next three days are going to seem like a century to me."

"Yes, Mom, I promise to be careful, and keep an eye on everything." She leaned down and gave her a good-bye kiss. Betty rode up then and said, "I kissed you good-bye before I got on, Mom, so guess I'll just have to throw you one now, as Ponto won't stand still, and he might step on you."

"Don't worry, I'm not coming close to that heathen! But be very good, dear, and do be careful, and I'll try not to worry," she told her.

The good-byes over, Jack and Betty started the horses after the democrat, and hoped they would have sense enough to follow it. Betty galloped her little pinto here and there rounding them up. She would have to do most of the work, since Ponto was much faster than Jerry. After a couple of attempts, they were all on the road. Everything would be fine for a few miles, as there were fences on both sides now, but later, when they hit the open country, they might have some trouble. By then they hoped the horses would be tired enough to follow the road of their own accord.

As they finally eased into a steady gait behind the democrat, Jack rode up beside Betty and asked, "How you doing, kid? That pony of yours sure works well."

"Doesn't he? I think he must have done this sort of thing before, as I don't have to do anything but stay on. As soon as a horse starts to leave the bunch, he's right after it without any move from me."

"Well, that's good!" Jack laughed, then added, "I'm glad there's someone in the bunch knows what to do, even if it is a horse. Golly! I'll bet we're sure going to have sore seats by tonight!"

Betty laughed, and agreed that more than likely he was right. An hour or so later, Jack rode up ahead and asked Loretta, "Want to ride for a while? Give you and Betty a chance to gabble, as I guess you're tired of your own company by now, eh? Anyway, I'll appreciate sitting on something with a little less motion for a spell."

"That'll be fine, Jack, because I'm becoming a little confused which road to follow, so we don't hit the main part of Regina; Pop said to keep south of it; guess you know where to turn north again, don't you?"

"Yes, I know this part anyway, and Pat assured me that once we were on the main road again we couldn't get lost."

Loretta eased Jerry down, until Betty caught up, then asked, "How you doing, Betts?"

"Just fine, Loretta! But I can't hold this pony to a slow gait. Maybe even he senses my eagerness to reach the new farm. My arms are aching from his constant head-tossing."

"He'll be glad to slow down before nightfall, I'll bet," Loretta suggested. They rode along in silence for a while, then she asked, "Did you get a chance to tell Curt good-bye?"

"Oh, sure! But he's a ninny! He actually looked like he was going to cry. I sure hope I meet someone new, someone a little more grown-up. I'm sick of babies!"

Loretta laughed, but didn't offer an answer, so Betty asked, "Aren't you excited about all the new people you are going to meet? Don't you want to meet any new men?" As she glanced at her, she saw her staring at Jack's back, so she said, "Oh, I guess not! You two are like a couple of moonstruck calves!"

"I guess we are at that, but don't you think he's wonderful?"

"Well, I have to admit he's good-looking, but I can't get too excited about him; he treats me like an infant, with his 'kid' this and 'kid' that, all the time. Is he a hot lover? Like you read about in books?"

"Betty! What a thing to say!" Loretta exclaimed, then mused aloud, "I don't know if he's good, but I do know he kisses me nice, and I like the way he holds me tight; that's even better than the kisses."

"Gosh!" Betty whispered, then stared off into the distance.

Loretta looked at her, then finally asked, "What are you gawking at?"

She came to with a start, and said, "Oh, you wouldn't be interested . . . but I was really thinking about you and Jack."

"Oh, come on and tell me," Loretta coaxed. After several pleas

Betty finally agreed to tell her, but cautioned, "Okay, but don't you laugh! See that big cloud with the gold from the sun shooting out from behind it?" Loretta replied that she did, so Betty continued, "Well, if you look over to the right side, you'll see what I mean. There is a high mountain on that side, and perched on the very top, up near the heavens, is a big, gold-and-pink castle. This is the morning after your wedding night; and of course you are a beautiful princess, and Jack is a handsome, dashing prince. You are lying in a bed of pure gold, with pink fluffy pillows all around you, and you are sound asleep. Your long, golden hair is spread over the pillows. Jack, who is awake, is lying half-reclining on his elbow, looking at you. He picks up a strand of the golden hair, and lets it slip through his fingers; then he looks at the golden lashes, resting on your cheeks, and he leans over and kisses each eyelid gently. They flutter, and you open your eyes, and then . . . I don't know what, for that is where you asked me what I was gawking at. Now go on and laugh! That's the usual procedure!"

"Of course I'll not laugh! It's a beautiful story, and especially as it's about us," Loretta told her.

"I don't usually tell my fairy tales to anyone but Pop, as he seems to be the only one who understands about them. Mom don't say much, but Margie comes right out and tells me I'm goofy, or some such thing. Maybe I am, I don't know. Guess I'm getting a little big for fairy tales, anyway."

"Of course you're not goofy!" Loretta assured her. "One of these days you'll find a real, live prince, and then all your fairy tales will become a real live story."

With that, the subject seemed closed to both girls, and they rode along in silence, each with her own thoughts. But finally Loretta suggested, "I think one of us should ride up and ask Jack what time it is. My stomach says it's near noon."

"Well, whether it's noon or not, I'm ready to eat. Why don't you go on up ahead and ask Jack the time?"

To her inquiry, Jack said it was only eleven o'clock, but suggested, that as soon as they found a place to water the horses so that they would be satisfied to graze, they'd find a place and

have their lunch. He changed places with Loretta and rode back to Betty and said, "You ride on ahead to that farmhouse and ask if they have enough water to let us bring our horses in for a drink; then after that, we'll find a spot for our lunch."

Betty eased her pony past the horses, then galloped on ahead to the farmhouse. The man was very nice, and said they could water the horses, and he also invited them to have dinner with him and his wife. Betty thanked him for his hospitality, but said that they had brought their own lunch. If they might water the horses, though, they would be much obliged. He told her to go right ahead and help herself.

Jack began to wonder if the horses were going to drink the man's well dry, as they were certainly thirsty, but finally they had their fill, and they were driven back onto the road. They plodded along for another couple of miles; then they came to some trees planted near a farmer's gate, and decided to stop in their shade and have lunch.

When they got all settled and were eating their lunch, Betty said, "Gosh! I'd almost forgotten how nice it is under a shady tree! Just think, I haven't sat under one since we left Minnesota!"

"Well, I can go you one better than that," Loretta put in, "for I've never had my lunch in the shade of one. Of course I've sat on the benches in the park in Regina, and enjoyed the shade, but usually there are so many other people with the same idea that it isn't very comfortable."

"I remember, I was in that park once, but it was in the winter-time, just before Christmas, and it was so bleak and dreary I've never had an inclination to see it again."

The afternoon wore along, and many of the horses had begun to lag; the colts especially were getting tired. Then the sun went down, and still no sign of Hillsby. Jack had thought, an hour or more ago, that they only had about eight miles more to go. Lucky there was still some Saskatchewan twilight left, or they might have to camp out all night.

Suddenly Betty exclaimed, "Look, Jack, right between those two bluffs! Isn't that lights?"

"You're right, kid, those are lights! I sure hope that is the end of the trail for today, as my seat is paralyzed, it seems. Bet you're tired too, eh?"

"Yes, I'm just numb all over."

In about half an hour they brought the horses into the main street of Hillsby. Jack asked some men where the corral was, and before he knew what was happening a half-dozen men appeared from here and there to give a hand. In no time at all the horses were watered, and someone brought hay for them. Jack tried to pay for their services, but they said it could be made up some way, at a later date, and that surely they could give a few favors without being paid for them. He felt rather sheepish when they put it that way.

Someone showed them to the eating-place, and then pointed out the hotel. As soon as they finished their meal, they went straight to the hotel, and got their rooms. They would have to be up early, as Pat's train would arrive about eight o'clock.

The girls had been in bed for quite a while, when Betty asked, "What's all the squirming for, Loretta? What's eating you anyway, can't you lie still?"

"Personally I think we have company in bed," she answered, "but I'm too darn tired to get up and light the lamp, to find out."

"You mean bedbugs?" Betty exclaimed, and made one bound out of bed. In a flash she had the lamp lit, and carried it over to the bed. Loretta lifted up her pillow, real quick, and there the devils were scurrying for cover.

"Ugh!" Loretta said, and scrambled out, too. She suggested they take their clothes off the wall, and pile suitcases and everything in the middle of the floor. Then she said, "Maybe a sponge-off in cold water will help; I feel crawly all over."

The remainder of the night was spent lying down, and dozing off, then up again to take another sponge-off. They left the lamp burning, and that helped to keep the nasty things in hiding.

At breakfast the following morning they asked Jack how he had slept. They expected an outburst, and were surprised when he answered, "Like a top! Feel real chipper this morning!"

The girls exchanged looks, then Loretta asked, "You didn't have any company during the night?"

"Company? What are you talking about? You goofy or something? Who would come visiting at that hour of the night?"

"Maybe I better find me a man with a little more feeling; don't you think I should, Betts?" Betty nodded her head yes, not trusting herself to speak.

Jack looked from one to the other, with an expression of half-bewilderment and half-anger on his face; then, as he saw Betty's shoulders shake as she tried not to laugh, he hissed, "Say! I'm being given the royal so-and-so for something. Maybe I might see what is so funny, if you'd enlighten me, just a tiny bit; of course, that is, if one of you can stop laughing long enough."

Betty was enjoying herself thoroughly, for she had often tried to get Jack's dander up, but he always subdued her with his "okay, kid." This time he really showed signs of getting mad. She turned to Loretta and said, "Maybe we shouldn't let him go out to the farm, as long as he wasn't careful; what if he should bring the company along? You know Mom; she'd have a fit!"

"Maybe you're right at that," Loretta agreed.

"Say!" Jack hissed, under his breath, "if we weren't in this damn restaurant, I'd give you both a piece of my mind!"

Loretta decided the whole thing had gone far enough, so told him what it was all about. He grinned then, and decided it was pretty funny after all, and he agreed, "You bet I better be careful, as Mrs. Mann would murder me if I brought such varmints into her new home."

After breakfast they walked to the corral, and found everything was fine there; as it was almost train time, they sauntered toward the tracks to be on hand to meet Pat. Several other curious people were standing around, and Betty and Loretta remarked to one another how friendly they seemed. Nearly everyone spoke to them, and they all knew who they were, and where they were going. News traveled fast in a small town!

Pat's train pulled in, and he waved and hollered to them. The engine huffed and puffed, and after a series of bumpings, Pat's

car was sidetracked and the long freight took off again down the track.

The greetings over, Pat remarked, "First of all, we must get the cattle off, and put them in the corral with the horses; then we'll get out two wagons, and harnesses for two teams; load the wagons, and start for the farm. Betty and Loretta, you two go get your saddle-ponies, and come back here and get the cattle, then take them up to the corral and water them."

Finally everything was ready for them to start to the farm. All those present offered their good wishes. Pat was fairly beaming, for he couldn't remember ever being anywhere in his life where people who were perfect strangers put themselves out so much to help. There had been a score or more men who offered help on every hand. Also the women made suggestions about food to take with them, which certainly would have been forgotten in the hustle and bustle. Pat felt he had repaid them somewhat when he distributed the milk from the morning's milking.

They made quite a commotion leaving town. Jack and Betty led, driving the horses; then came the cattle, followed by Loretta in the democrat, which was piled so high that you could scarcely find her. Pat brought up the rear, driving one team and wagon, and leading the other. In one was the pigs and calves, and the other was loaded with the kitchen stove, beds, table and chairs, and some bedding; then, on top of all that, were the crates of chickens.

Just before they pulled out, Pat remarked, "I feel just like a pioneer with his wagon train." Despite all they were taking, he and Jack would have to return tomorrow for the balance of the household effects, and there would be all the machinery to take out, too.

Such excitement when they rounded the curve in the coulee road and the buildings came into view. The gate had scarcely closed before Betty dug her heels into Ponto's ribs, and galloped him toward the house, calling back to Loretta to hurry up. They rushed inside and dashed from room to room, with many oh's and ah's, as they opened first one door and then another.

Pat decided that the first thing they must do was to get the

stove up, so they could have a bite to eat. They all tugged, shoved, and cursed, but finally it was installed. The men brought in the table and chairs, then left for the barn to water and feed the stock, and try to bring some order there in settling them where they belonged.

The girls brought in the groceries, and started looking for dishes, pots, and pans; but none could be found, so they decided that they were still in the boxcar in town. "Whatever can we do?" Betty asked. "We can't very well cook anything without even a pan to heat it in."

"Well there isn't much we can do except make sandwiches, I guess. Here's the cold meat we bought."

"But how are we going to cut the bread? And Pop definitely will want coffee, and there's nothing to make it in," Betty wailed.

Loretta studied a minute, then exclaimed, "Say, there's the basket in the democrat! the one Mom fixed for us on the road; and there are cups, knives and forks, the coffeepot, and that little skillet. Gosh! We can manage fine. Phew! Was that ever a close call?"

"Sure was," Betty agreed, "but trust Mom, she perhaps had this all figured out beforehand. I'll dash out and get the basket."

When Pat and Jack came in answer to their call, they were told how they very nearly didn't have anything to eat. Pat laughed, and agreed that Mom more than likely knew exactly what would happen, and she would get a kick out of it all.

When the meal was finished, Betty and Loretta started carrying the beds and things upstairs. They managed fine until it came to carrying the big, awkward mattresses. Betty, on the lead up the stairs, finally panted, "Golly, Loretta, I can't go a step further."

"Oh, come on, we're almost there," she urged.

They heaved and tugged, but the mattress seemed stuck somewhere. The more they pulled and jerked, the more they got the giggles over their efforts. Loretta finally gasped, "Shut up, Betty! If you're going to keep this up, and make me laugh any more, I'm going to have to leave you here hanging on to this thing, and take myself a trip down across the yard."

"What did you have to bring that subject up for? Now you've got me in the notion, too!"

"Okay now, get ready!" Loretta tried to put authority into her voice. "One . . . two . . . three . . . heave-ho! There she goes!" With a final burst of strength, the mattress was deposited in the upstairs hall, but both girls were down the stairs on flying feet, and out across the yard; they made a beeline for a small, wooden structure on the other side of the garden.

Established in the throne room, Betty exclaimed, "Oh, my! Pop will sure have to find a new location for this place!" Then she laughed and added, "How terrible! One could never park here long enough for the dishes to be washed and dried!"

"That will suit Mom to a T then, as she will always be certain of help with the dishes," Loretta told her, and laughed.

Both girls worked like Trojans, and there began to be some order in the house. This was the day Mom and the girls were to arrive, and Pop had already gone to meet the train which was bringing them. Betty and Loretta had made every effort to get everything just right. Loretta had baked a fresh batch of bread today, and Betty had just finished making a cake. These didn't come out exactly like Mom's, but Pop assured them they had done fine. Before he left for the station he asked Jack to make some shelves for the cellar, then help the girls carry the heavy boxes of preserved fruit, pickles, cured hams, and bacon down into it. When Jack came with the shelves, they lit two lanterns and descended into the black pit under the kitchen and dining-room.

"Golly, this place gives me the willies!" Betty exclaimed. "I'll bet it's full of mice, and maybe rats, too."

"And even lizards, I judge," Jack put in. "Any place this damp usually has them."

"Ugh! I sure hope not," Loretta said, and took one lantern and started peering about. "If there is anything I can't stand it's those slimy, black-gray things. At one of my sisters', one time, I found some in the potato bin, and they scared the wits out of me. You see, while picking up the potatoes, I picked up one

of those cold things in my hand. You can bet that was my last trip down there without a light."

"For gosh sakes, Loretta! Will you shut up? I feel creepy all over," Betty snapped. "Let's get started on this stuff. Mom sure believes in preparing for all emergencies, I guess; there's sure a stack of this stuff," she added, as she started digging into one of the large boxes.

"Yes, she does," Loretta answered, "but it's a good idea, as canned fruit and vegetables run into a great deal of money when you have to buy them from the store."

When Jack finished hanging the last shelf, he suggested he go on up and get at something else.

"Okay, you go on," Betty told him, "we'll soon make short work of this." As he started up the stairs, she called after him, "But Jack, you better bring down the potatoes, those sacks of dried onions, and anything else you see up there in the back kitchen."

"That's right," he answered her. "Pat did tell me to fetch them down, too."

At last the cellar work was completed, and the girls had barely finished freshening up when they heard the team arriving with the rest of the family. Janet and Margie hardly took time to kiss the girls, and say hello, before they were off on a tour of inspection; but Mary took her time from room to room, with Betty and Loretta at her heels. As the last room was looked at, she turned to the girls and said, "Darlings! You have done wonders. Both of you must have worked like beavers to get so much done. I'm so proud of you!" She placed an arm around each one, gave them a tight squeeze, then kissed first one and then the other. "However would I manage without both of you? I sometimes wonder how I used to get everything done before I had two grown girls to help me."

Both girls were highly pleased, but slightly embarrassed with such extra-special praise. Betty finally said, "Oh, that's okay, 'twas nothing, really. Just a breeze, you know, getting it all done," and she waved her arm to demonstrate.

Mom looked at her, then asked rather sternly, "Now whatever kind of language is that?"

"Sorry, Mom," she offered, and felt much more at ease after the reprimand.

Mom suddenly realized she had poured her praises on a little thick and had embarrassed the girls, so she suggested, "Now let's go back downstairs, as I saw a perfectly elegant cake on the way through the kitchen. Let's brew a pot of coffee, and invite Pop and Jack to join us."

"Golly, a party! What fun!" Loretta exclaimed, and both girls started down the stairs on the run; but halfway down, Betty looked back at Mom, her eyes dancing, and said, "You know you're pretty extra-special yourself!" Then she dashed on down the stairs. Mom mumbled to herself, "Now I wonder who is half-embarrassed with praise?" As she entered she found Betty busy shaking up the fire, and making a great clatter of it all, so she decided to not say anything.

In short time the kitchen was full of the aroma of fresh-brewed coffee. The table held cups and Betty's cake, and Mom suggested they call Pat, Jack, Margie, and Jan to the house.

Pat entered first, and demanded, "What in thunderation goes on? Is the place on fire or something?" Then his eyes spied the table, which held the cake and coffeecups. "Look Jack! A party! Did you ever know such a bunch of women? Always surprises, and nice ones too!"

"Yes, you're right, Pat," Jack answered, "They fair take your breath away sometimes, don't they?"

"Listen to the two of them, will you?" Mary asked the girls, then added, "A couple of half-baked Irishmen trying to be funny! Oh, excuse me, Jack, I forgot; you're mostly Scotch descent, aren't you? But you're beginning to talk just like a fresh Irishman, I know."

Pat's eyes were dancing, as he walked over and put his arm around Mary; then, looking at the girls, he suggested, "All right, take her over the coals, for being so fresh and slangy too, calling us a couple of half-baked Irishmen!"

"That was kind of fresh, and slangy too," Mary admitted. "My apologies, my dears!"

Pat pulled her to him and kissed her cheek. "That's my good girl! You're wonderful, you know." Then he laughed. "You're all wonderful! Let's eat the cake, and celebrate being together for our first meal in our new home!"

Mary freed herself from his arm and took command. "Loretta, bring the coffee, will you please? Betty dear, you cut the cake; Margie and Jan, you two sit on this side of the table. Pat darling, the head of the table, please; I'll sit at this end; Loretta you're next to Pat there; then you, Jack, and Betty, you're next beside Jack. Now that you're all seated, will you ask a blessing, Pat, please?"

He gave her a quick glance, as it wasn't a regular custom to ask the blessing. Mary always insisted on it if there was company, but not under regular circumstances like this; but it was a very good idea, he decided. Now that they were in their own home, there should always be a thankful blessing before meals. He bowed his head, and said, "God, please put Your blessing upon this gathering, and may we convey our special thanks to You for this fare, this day and always, Amen."

Silence hung over the room for a moment, then little Jan piped up, "Please, can't we eat the cake now?"

"Of course we can!" Mary laughed. "Pat dear, help yourself, and pass it along, will you please?"

Everyone was busy enjoying the cake, and complimenting Betty, when Trusty gave a warning bark that someone was coming. Pat got up and went to see who it was. As he opened the door, he saw that a tall, good-looking boy was tying his horse to the gate. As he came toward the house, Pat judged that he was perhaps seventeen; taller than average, almost six feet; blond, wavy hair and blue eyes, which were steady for one so young. Pat thought to himself: He's sure going to be a big fellow when he gets filled out, and those broad shoulders depict plenty of hard work. As he came close to Pat he extended his hand and said, "I'm Robby Stewart, and Mother and Dad asked me to come over and convey our good wishes." Then he heaved a sigh as if he had rid himself of a huge load.

"How do you do, Robby! Come on in, and meet the rest of the family. We're just celebrating Mrs. Mann's, Margie's, and Janet's arrival with coffee and cake." As they came in the door Pat exclaimed, "Company, folks!" Taking Robby by the arm, he led him toward the table. "This is Mrs. Mann; my eldest daughter Elizabeth or Betty; those two over there are Margaret and Janet; then this beautiful blonde here on this side is Miss Loretta Grey; and this is Mr. Jack Carroll."

After each one acknowledged the introduction, Mary suggested, "Please join us, won't you, Robby? Margie, make room there by you and Jan."

"Thank you, Mrs. Mann, I guess I will, for that cake looks wonderful."

"Betty's efforts," Pat offered.

Robby looked at Betty, then grinned and said, "If it tastes as good as it looks, it should be elegant!"

"It's pretty good, Robby," Mary told him, "but don't always be fooled by their looks. Betty's rather good at dressing up the outside, regardless of what's on the inside, but this time it's all good."

"Oh Mother, please!" Betty pleaded. "You make such a fuss!"

"Mother indeed!" Pat retorted. "I thought it was always Mom?" Then, seeing Betty's face redden, he quickly said, "Sorry, chicken, I was only teasing anyway." But Mary thought: What's the matter with Pat, don't he realize Betty is growing up? Sometimes he don't show any more sense than a totem pole!

But Betty quickly recovered her poise and said, "That's okay, Pop, but let's drop it!" Then she turned to Robby and quietly asked, "Where do you live from here?"

"Just across the coulee there," and he nodded his head to the south.

"Oh, real close! I've been wondering who lived there. Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

"Yes, I have a sister about your age; her name is Elyse. Then there are two younger brothers, Johnny and Billy."

"You must bring them over to visit, too," Mary suggested.

"Well, part of the reason I'm here is not only to convey Mother's and Dad's welcome, but also to invite you to join us

Saturday night at our house. We're having a little get-together of some of the close neighbors and their families."

"Well, I don't know . . ." Mary hesitated, then added, "You see we're hardly settled, and—"

"Oh, please, Mom," Betty and Margie chorused at once. "We haven't been to a party in such ages."

Mary looked at Pat, and he nodded his head yes, so she said, "Well, all right then, we shall go, unless something unforeseen comes up to interfere, and if so we'll get word across to you."

"That will be fine, Mrs. Mann," Robby answered. He shoved his chair back and said, "Now, if you folks will excuse me, please, I think I should be getting back home."

Pat arose too, and said, "It's been mighty nice meeting you, Robby; and come on over any time you feel like it."

"Thanks, Mr. Mann, and it has been nice meeting all of you." He picked up his cap and jacket and started for the door. Pat accompanied him out. After Robby left, he returned to the house and remarked, "Fine boy, eh? Nice manners, too!"

"Yes, exceptionally so," Mary agreed. "If the rest of the family are as nice, we are certainly going to enjoy our neighbors on the south."

For Betty, at least, it seemed the week would never go by, and that it would never be Saturday night, and time to go to the party. But eventually Saturday came, and now everyone was in the midst of dressing for it. Such a commotion all over the house, especially upstairs, and much running back and forth between rooms. Loretta and Betty had a room to themselves now; Margie and Jan had one also, across the hall, next to Mom and Pop's bedroom. Then Jack had the back bedroom, off the back stairway.

Mom finished helping Margie and Jan dress, then came across the hall to see how Loretta and Betty were getting along. She found Betty with her hair done up, and all the arguments in the world wouldn't make her put it down again; but she finally agreed on a compromise, and pinned a large ribbon bow across the back. Mom had to admit that she did look lovely, and so did Loretta.

They made a lovely contrast, Loretta so blonde and fair, and Betty's dark hair with its red highlights.

They drove into the Stewart yard, and found teams and vehicles tied up everywhere, as it was still mild enough for the horses to be outside, but they did have blankets tossed over them. Pat made a mental note of that. Robby was in the yard awaiting their arrival and, after greeting them, invited them into the house. His quick glance told him that Pat did not have blankets for his team, so he suggested to Jack that he put them in the back stall of the barn.

When they entered the house, they found every room full of laughing, chattering people. Robby introduced them to his mother and dad, then suggested she take over from there on. She had a quiet, dignified grace, which Mary envied, and she went about the whole procedure without any effort at all. Introductions finished, she and Mary found a seat together on the sofa, and started exchanging pleasantries, as if they were old, old friends.

Then Mr. Stewart's loud, booming voice, with its burring Scotch accent, made itself heard above all the din: "Quiet! Quiet! All of you!" The voices simmered into silence and he continued, "You young ones hie yourselves all in here! You can take up the rug, and bring your music, and there's the piano, so sing or dance to your hearts' content. We elders will use the dining-room and kitchen, and I'm thinking a game of progressive whist might be started, eh? Bring your chairs with you, as the young fry won't need them, they'll not be having time to squat. Mother, you get some tables ready for cards, will you?"

The words were no sooner out of Mr. Stewart's mouth than the rug was up, and with the door closed to the dining-room the young folks were ready for their dance. An older man, whom they all intimately called Andy, and his son brought out their fiddles. Most of the girls took turns accompanying on the piano, or else just chorded in key.

When the first waltz started, Robby came to ask Betty to dance. She started to refuse, then said, "Robby, I don't know much about dancing. You see, they never had dances where

we've been living. I've tried a few times with the girls at school, is all. But I'd love to learn, if you think you have patience to teach me."

"I can't think of anything I would like better, Betty. Come on, let's start, shall we?" and he held out his arms in invitation.

After a few awkward steps, she more or less got the swing of it, and Robby told her, "Golly! You're doing fine! A few lessons, and you'll be a wonderful dancer."

"You're just teasing, trying to make me feel good!" But she began to feel enough at ease to look around the room. She saw Elyse dancing with a tall, good-looking dark-complexioned boy. There was Margie, trying to learn with one of Robby's younger brothers; and Loretta and Jack, too. They made a lovely couple, but she wondered when Loretta learned to dance so well; Jack must have taught her.

One dance followed the other, even the new two-step, which was all the rage right now. The room wasn't very large, but they managed to set up two sets of quadrilles, four couples to each. Betty was intrigued by them. The fast rollicking music, the stamping of feet, and the laughter; also, you had to listen to what the caller was saying, then perform it and follow the rest. The first one finished with a promenade, and they rested and chatted for a while. When the second set started, the music broke into a waltz tune, and the caller sang:

"First couple down center, and there you divide,
 . The lady go right, the gent to the left,
 Honor your partner, and don't be afraid
 To swing on the corner, with a waltz promenade.

"Tra-la-la, la-la, la-la-la;
 Tra-la-la; tra-la-la;
 Tra-la-la; la-la-la, la-la-la;
 Tra-la-la; tra-la-la."

All the couples went down the center, and there divided until the ladies had been handed completely around the set. When the

dance finished Betty's cheeks were flushed and her eyes sparkling. She turned to her partner and said, "Oh, but that was fun! Just think what I've been missing. I never danced one before, you know."

"Well, you could have fooled me; you did as well as a regular oldtimer," her partner replied. He was blond, stocky Harry Burns, who told her that he and his folks were neighbors, and lived two miles west of them.

Mr. Stewart stuck his head in the door to announce that they'd better have their supper waltz, as the food was all ready. Betty got a queer feeling in the pit of her stomach. What if no one asked her for the supper waltz, and she had to eat alone? But, as the music started, she saw Robby coming toward her. When he got near enough, he asked, "You'll have supper with me, won't you, Betty?"

"Yes, I'd love to, Robby!" He put his arm around her, and glided onto the floor. As she looked around, she discovered most of the older folks had joined them in the dance. Gosh! There were Mom and Pop! What good dancers they were! As they came close to them, she asked, "Why didn't you ever tell me you two were such whizzes? You could have taught me Pop, then I wouldn't have been such a handful for Robby tonight."

"I sure should have," he said, and swung Mom into a fancy whirl.

"What do you mean a 'handful for me'?" Robby demanded. "I wouldn't have missed teaching you, the little bit I did, for anything. You know you just fit right in my arms for me to dance with; better than any girl ever did before." Betty flushed, and he quickly added, "I really mean it, Betty, I'm not being fresh, even though I perhaps didn't put it very well."

"Yes, I guess I know that you mean it, but don't mind me, I'm just not very used to accepting compliments, you see."

Then he suggested, "Let's find a place to sit for supper, shall we? How about the top step of the stairway? Before someone else has the same idea!"

They made a dash for it, but everyone else had the same idea; however, after a great deal of shoving and laughing, they were

installed on the top step. Next below them were Elyse and Don, the good-looking boy; then came Jack and Loretta, and so on down the entire stairway the couples were seated. Betty didn't see Margie, so decided she had stayed in the parlor with the younger group.

The womenfolk came with plates heaped high with sandwiches, and cups of steaming-hot coffee. They passed them up the stairway, from one couple to the next, cautioning them all the time to be careful with the hot coffee. Then these were followed by another group, with heaped plates of cake.

Robby took a white handkerchief from his pocket and spread it over Betty's lap, remarking as he did so, "You be extra careful of that pretty blue dress, as I want to see you in it again. I'll always remember how very pretty you looked in it tonight, anyway."

"Robby, please! You're embarrassing me!"

"Sorry, pretty, I really didn't mean to, but don't forget what I said, just the same," he whispered.

Just then Elyse turned around and said, "Don't let him get you down, Betty, as he's noted for his flattery. Ask any of the girls, and they'll tell you he gives them all the same line. One of these days he's going to meet his Waterloo, though; isn't that so, Don?" and she looked up into Don's dark eyes, and chuckled.

"Listen my pretty black-haired sister! Unless you wish to be minus a few of those lovely black curls, you had just better stop knocking my stock down," Robby retorted in answer.

Then Jack turned around and asked, "Hey! What goes up there?"

Don answered, "Pay no heed, man, it's just brother and sister Stewart showing their deep love for one another. You'll get used to it if you're going to live around these parts, but I can warn you right here and now that it doesn't mean a thing."

Betty sat in silence during this byplay of words between Robby and Elyse. She felt that she would like to crawl away in some corner and hide, as she was the cause of it all.

Elyse and Don whispered and giggled some more, then Elyse

turned her laughing face up to her brother and asked, "Forgiven, darling?"

He reached over and fondly pinched her ear, remarking as he did so, "Always, love of my life!"

Then he turned back to Betty and said, "As I was saying, when so rudely interrupted, you are lovely in blue, and you should wear it a great deal."

Betty stared at him in amazement, and wondered what kind of a family this was. He saw the astonished look on her face and started to laugh, "Listen, big blue eyes! You didn't take Elyse and I seriously, did you? That's the way we show our deep love for one another."

Elyse heard the seriousness in Robby's voice, so turned to Betty and said, "Please, Betty, don't ever take any notice of Robby and I, for we weren't quarreling, really we weren't; although I guess it sounded so to someone who doesn't know us. You will forgive me, won't you? I should have realized it would make you feel terrible."

She felt the tenseness begin to leave her, and she answered, "Forget it, Elyse, of course you didn't offend me."

"Golly! I'm glad," she replied. "Just when I finally have a girl my own age move real close, I almost muff our friendship before it really gets started."

By this time most of the couples had already left the stairway, but Robby suggested he go get some more hot coffee for him and Betty, so they could finish their cake. Betty agreed that she would like some more. As he started down the stairs, he asked Elyse and Don to wait, and keep Betty company until he returned. Elyse and Betty talked about school, and found they were in the same grade. Elyse promised to stop by for Betty Monday morning; also, she would help her get registered and started in class. Betty felt relieved that she would know at least one girl on her first day in a strange school.

Robby returned with two steaming cups of coffee, and set them down on the step between them. Elyse and Don said that they were going down and join the rest of the crowd, who were

all grouped around the piano, singing their favorite songs.

There was silence between the two youngsters, as they each munched their cake. Robby finished first, set his cup down, then leaned back and watched her. Finally he asked, "Would you be very shocked if I asked to kiss you?"

"Robby, stop such talk!" she exclaimed, "Of course I would!"

"Of course you would what? Be shocked? Or you'd let me?"

"Certainly I wouldn't let you," she retorted. "Let's go downstairs." And she rose and started down ahead of him. She was sizzling mad, and thought, The nerve of him! Here I just meet him, and he wants to be fresh! Ignoring him completely, she went to join the group around the piano.

Soon the two fiddlers returned and began tuning their instruments. As the music started again, and the couples took the floor, Robby held out his arms for Betty. She decided she had better dance with him, and not make a scene. However, she held herself very stiffly and properly.

Robby stood it for a couple times around the room, then pleaded, "Please, Betty, don't be mad at me; I was in the wrong to ask you such a thing, but it just popped out because I really felt like I wanted to kiss you. Is that so wrong? But I promise I won't ask again, unless I feel you really want me to. Am I forgiven?"

She didn't answer right away. He tightened his arm around her and, putting his lips close to her ear, pleaded, "Please, Princess! You are like a princess, you know."

A delightful thrill went through her, and she answered, "Oh Robby, where do you get such talk? You sound exactly like Pop with his blarney, when he's coaxing Mom for something. I can't stay mad at you! And what's more, I don't want to."

"Thanks, Princess," he quietly replied, then added, "That's going to be my special name for you always."

"Don't you dare call me that where anyone can hear you!" What if Margie or Pop should hear him? They would never get done teasing.

"No, I won't," he promised, "but when there is just the two of us, I can, can't I?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"Good girl! And I promise again, I'll be real careful, that no one but you ever hears me, Princess!" He tightened his arm again, and they continued the dance in silence.

Dance after dance followed, each one with a different partner. Betty was having a wonderful time, but beginning to feel a little tired. Still it was the best, the very best, time she had ever had.

Mr. Stewart finally came in and announced that the older folks were ready to call it an evening, and that they should make this their last dance. The music started a dreamy waltz, and Betty and Robby danced without saying a word, perfect peace between them again. Then the music drifted into *Auld Lang Syne*; the couples stopped dancing, crossed arms, and joined hands to form a circle. All joined in the words:

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot
And days of auld lang syne?"

As the last note fell, there was a scurrying for coats and wraps, everyone chattering and laughing at once. Invitations galore were showered upon the Manns.

Robby managed a final word with Betty: "Don't suppose you'd let me drive you home, would you?"

"No, Robby, not tonight; and anyway I'd have to ask Mom and Pop. Some other time, eh?"

Just then Elyse came up and said, "Hey, Rob, break it up! Betty's folks are waiting." She put her arm around Betty, and gave her a squeeze. "I'll give the poor lovesick calf a break tomorrow, as I've decided to come over, and we'll plan for school Monday. I'll bring him along, okay?"

"That will be fine," she answered over her shoulder, and dashed after Mom and Pop. Pop was carrying Janet, who was dead asleep. Mr. and Mrs. Stewart were at the gate, bidding everyone good night, or good morning really, as it was near two

in the morning. Betty stopped to bid them good-bye, and thank them for a lovely time.

Mrs. Stewart replied, "We're very glad you had a nice time, Betty. Dad and I are both so happy that we are going to have such lovely neighbors, and especially a family with children near the same age as our own. You girls come over just any time; you too, Jack; and of course you're both included in that invitation, Mary and Pat. You don't mind my using your Christian names, do you?"

"I should say not!" Mary answered first.

"Not in the very least," Pat added. "Makes a person feel like we're old friends, which I'm sure we are going to be." Then he turned to his family and asked, "Is everyone settled?" They assured him they were, so he said, "Well then, we'll be on our way, and thanks again for a wonderful evening. Be seeing you all soon, I hope!"

Jack clucked to the team, and they left the yard. Nothing was said for several minutes, then Pat asked Betty, "Guess you made quite an impression on the eldest son, eh chicken?"

"Don't tease, Pop. I had such a wonderful time! I'll just never forget this evening, and I'm so glad we moved to Hillsby."

"Hum! Yes I can see you would be," he mumbled, then turned to Margie and said, "Well how about you? Did you have fun too?"

"I sure did, Pop, even if I didn't moon around like Betty did. She and Robby acted like they'd been struck by lightning or something. Real goofy-like!" She giggled to herself.

"Shut up, Margie!" Betty retorted.

"Hush up, the two of you!" Mom put in with her quiet voice, then she asked Betty, "Didn't I hear you and Elyse planning something about school?"

"Oh yes, Mom, isn't it wonderful? She and I are in the same class. She's coming over tomorrow to talk it over; also, she said she would see me through registration, and all the preliminaries. Golly! I'm so glad, as I was really dreading that first day."

"Johnny and Billy go to the neighborhood school, Mom, and they offered I could ride to school with them," Margie put in.

"This time of the year they go on horseback, but later they take the cutter, when it gets real cold, and they said there would be room for me in the cutter with them."

"That's nice, girls," Mom answered, then Pop put in, "Looks like the young fry are all fixed up about going to school." She answered yes to him, and in her heart she was glad, for maybe it wouldn't be such a struggle for them this time, as when they started at Coulee Hill.

Pat called out then, "Well, here we are! Everyone pile out!" He jumped down and gave everyone a hand, then took Jan into his arms again, "Okay Jack, you can put the team away now."

Just before everyone started to leave for upstairs and bed, Pat spoke up and said, "There's a little matter I'd like to get off my chest, so here goes. I can see there are going to be a great many parties in the near future, as these are very neighborly and friendly people, but there will be a rule: regardless of the time we come in, you, Loretta, will be up to make breakfast at your regular time; Betty and Margie you must be up to help with the chores; Mom and Jan are the only ones to be permitted to stay in bed. Of course on Saturday night it won't be so bad, as we don't usually get up real early on Sunday. But if you will all abide by that there is no reason in the world why we can't take in all the parties. Is that okay with all of you?"

"It is with me," Loretta answered first, "and I really think it is right for us to do it that way; also right that Mom should get the extra rest." Betty and Margie agreed with her, so good-nights were said, and everyone left for upstairs and bed. Pat picked up Janet from the sofa, and followed Mary and the lamp upstairs.

Betty undressed in silence, and was in bed before Loretta hardly got started. Loretta finally blew out the lamp and crawled in on her side, then putting an arm around Betty, she gave her a hug and asked, "You had a wonderful time tonight, didn't you? Robby seems such a nice young man, and a very polite one, too. You liked him, didn't you? What did he talk to you about? You had regular stars in your eyes."

"Oh he said lots of things," she replied, and lapsed into silence.

"What kind of things?" Loretta inquired. "You can tell Big Sis about it if you really want to, and if you don't wish to you don't need to, for I'll understand anyway."

"In that case I guess I won't Loretta, especially not tonight."

"Okay, darling," Loretta agreed, and reached over and kissed her on the cheek. "Good night, dear, and have real pleasant dreams."

"Good night, Big Sis!" Betty whispered in return.

In the bedroom across the hall, Pat pulled Mary into his arms and said, "Come on over here to your old man! Do you feel like I do, dear? I must say it makes one feel kind of funny to see the young ones getting older. Now tonight I suddenly realized Betty is a young lady, with young men going to start to fall in love with her."

"Yes, it's true," Mary admitted, then laughed, "but it's funny, I don't really feel any older."

"Neither do I, colleen!" and he tightened his arms about her.

"Pat, please!" she gasped. "You're crushing me to bits!"

"That I'll do this minute, unless you come over closer to me," and he put his words into effect as he tightened his hold even more.

Mary moved closer to him, feeling she was drowning in his arms. "Oh, my darling!" he whispered, and locked her tight to him, in an all-consuming embrace. The drowning feeling left, to be replaced by white-hot fire racing through her; then the fire burned out, and once again she felt as if she were being pushed down, down into the water, and at last there was only the feeling of cool water flowing over her body, as if she were cleansed through and through.

There was quiet for long minutes, then Pat whispered, "My own sweet one! You are everything, everything! What if I had never found you? It scares me when I think of it."

"Well then, don't think of it, for you do have me, and I don't mean maybe. Once you put those big, possessive arms around me, I'm completely lost."

"Well, thank the saints it's in my arms you get lost," he laughed. "Don't ever try losing yourself any other place."

"No fear of that, my dear! Not when you keep such a strangle-hold on me as you have right now." She tried to free herself, and finally retorted, "You're still crushing me to bits, Pat!"

"Sorry, sweet, I guess I better let you have a tiny bit of room to breathe, hadn't I? What's more, we better get to sleep, or I might as well get up, put my clothes back on, and go to work."

"Would serve you right! Then maybe some time you could go to bed and straight to sleep for a change!"

"Now wouldn't that be a dull life?"

"Yes, I guess it would at that. Good night and sweet dreams, my Irishman!" and she tucked her head snugly on his shoulder.

In the Stewart residence the remains of the party were nearly all put to rights. Mother Stewart finally suggested, "Let's leave the rest till morning, and morning's nearly here, at that. Off to bed all of you!" They didn't need a second bidding, and trooped off upstairs.

Elyse had a small room in the southeast corner of the house; a very feminine room, all ruffles, frills, and little doodads. She was standing in her nightie in front of the mirror, brushing the mass of black curls, when a light rap sounded on her door. It opened a crack and Robby asked, "Can I come in, Sis?"

"Come on in, Romeo!" she told him, then asked, "What's on your mind?"

"Not much, feel sort of wide awake or something."

"Okay, tell me all," she demanded, "but I'm crawling under the covers to keep warm." Robby still didn't say anything, so she asked, "You liked her a lot, didn't you?"

"She's lovely, isn't she? Imagine what a beautiful woman she will be when she is older; but what I don't understand is myself; I feel like a vacuum or something. Don't know if that is the word, but anyway it's a darn funny feeling."

"Gosh, Rob! Maybe that's love or something," Elyse suggested.

"But I don't want to be in love, especially at seventeen. Now, if I were twenty-five or so, it would be all right. I've always loved

all the girls, and had such fun telling them nice things, watching them blush or stammer their embarrassment, and now I feel like . . . oh, I don't know what I really feel like!"

"I guess you'll recover," his sister offered. "You have before, you know."

"Well, maybe, but it's such a sort of different feeling, Elyse. You're falling asleep, Sis, so I won't keep you up any longer, dear. Thanks for being patient with my goofy conversation. Like you say, I'll more than likely have recovered by morning." He chuckled as he leaned over and gave her a light peck on the cheek. "I'll duck the light, kid! Good night!"

"Good night!" she mumbled, and heard him softly close the door.

Sunday morning! Oh beautiful day! The most perfect morning I've ever known! Such thoughts were running through Betty's mind as she skipped up and down the coulee hills, looking for the cattle. She had slept very little, but felt as though she were walking on air. Over and over in her mind went the events of the night before: all the people she had met; each dance she had danced; Robby and the things he had said. She wondered how he would act today, and if he and Elyse would really come over. She carried on through the morning in a sort of daze; washing breakfast dishes; making beds; sweeping floors, then helping prepare the Sunday noontime meal.

Dinner finally over, and the dishes washed again, everyone was in a lazy mood. Jack had gone to his room for a snooze; Loretta said she thought she would do likewise, as she was beginning to feel the effects of hardly any sleep the night before. Pat was on the sofa sleeping like a log, since the last mouthful of dinner was down.

Mom suggested to Betty, "You go along too and rest, dear. I'm going to catch up on some reading, and if your company comes, I'll call you."

"Guess I will, Mom, as I can hardly keep my eyes open since

dinner." She went on upstairs, quietly removed her shoes and dress, then lay down on her side of the bed. Loretta was already asleep, so she tried not to wake her.

An hour or so later, she felt someone touch her shoulder. She opened her eyes, and saw Mom standing over her. She whispered, "It's three o'clock, and Margie just came in to say there are four horsebackers headed this way from the south. Could be Elyse and her brothers. You better get up and get dressed. Try not to waken Loretta, if you can help it."

"Okay, Mom," she whispered back, and quietly slid off the bed. "What will I put on?" she then asked.

"Oh, I guess one of your new prints will be dressy enough for around home here. I'll go on down and keep them company until you're ready."

"I'll make it snappy as I can, Mom!"

Going over to the commode, she poured cold water from the tall pitcher into the bowl, then thoroughly splashed her face to awaken herself.

As she stood in front of the mirror, dressing, she patted her hips, and reminded herself to speak to Mom again about that corset. She was getting far too big a girl to be running around with her hips joggling. Thank goodness Mom finally took some darts in those corset covers. She looked at her side view and decided that the darts helped; the darn things didn't poke out quite so much, but gosh! it was sure an effort to breath in the thing. She ran the comb and brush over her curls, then pulled them on top of her head, and pinned them there. No, that wouldn't do, she decided; too dressed up for the print. She let them down again, and started rummaging in the top dresser-drawer, finally finding what she was looking for, an amber-colored barrette. She gathered all the curls into it, at the back of her neck, took another look with the hand mirror, and decided that it was much better.

She opened the bedroom door and started down the stairs. . . . What the heck? Oh, those darn shoelaces! So she seated herself on the top step, and laced up the knee-high shoes. Mom

would perhaps raise cain with her for putting them on to wear around home, as they were her best pair, but she didn't have time to worry about it right now. Shoes all laced, she continued on down the stairs, and on into the parlor. Robby and Elyse sat talking to Mom and Pop.

Robby quickly got to his feet when Betty entered; she liked the gesture, but it embarrassed her, for everyone looked toward her. She managed to say, "Hello, Elyse! Hi, Robby!"

"Hello yourself!" Elyse answered first. "How do you feel after your long night of dancing?"

Before she could answer Elyse, Robby quietly said, "Hello, Betty! Won't you sit here?" and indicated his chair. Then he crossed the room and seated himself beside Mom on the sofa. "You look nice and bright, not a bit like you had danced all night," he then added.

Pat answered for her, "Everyone's been snoozing here, since they put down the last mouthful of dinner; so guess we all are pretty rested right now."

"Don't worry, we did too," Elyse replied. "I could hardly stand up to finish the dishes, so Mother finally took pity on me, and offered to do pots and pans, and I just died for about two hours. Guess I'd be sleeping yet, but Rob came and finally pulled me out."

"You know, Elyse should be a lady of leisure, for there's nothing she likes better than to pile in bed with a stack of pillows, a box of candy, and a book or magazine. I always tell her she must make sure to pick herself a wealthy husband, so she won't have much work to do," Robby said in a teasing voice.

"Such a funny jokester!" Elyse taunted, then asked, "Pray where would I find the wealthy husband, around these parts?"

"I don't know, but I'd be willing to bet you'll find him anyway."

"Well more power to her, if she can," Pat put in. "Life on a Saskatchewan farm isn't exactly playtime for any woman."

"It isn't so much the work," Elyse answered. "It's the ungodly hours that get me. Trying to beat that sun up every morning! I sometimes think old Mr. Sol knows all about it, and espe-

cially in summer, and he gets up earlier and earlier, racing you for some reason."

Mom laughed, and said, "Well, at last; someone with my ideas. I feel the same way about that old sun, but I refuse to race him before four thirty in the morning, although Pat says he sometimes pokes his face over the horizon as early as three o'clock."

"Yes, he does," Robby said, "for I often get a good early look at him during summer holidays. And speaking of holidays reminds me: we came over to arrange about you going into school with Elyse and myself. Do you have a pony you can ride, Betty?"

"Yes, I have an Indian pinto. Mom and Pop gave him to me this fall for my birthday. By the way, how many miles is it to Qu'Appelle, where the high school is?"

"It's eight miles," Robby said. "Pretty long jaunt morning and night, but Elyse and I manage nearly all winter. Once in a while we have to stop over with friends, if there's a blizzard or bad snowstorm. Is there anyone you could stay with if that should happen, Betty?"

Mom answered for her, and said, "Yes, I'm sure you could stay with Mrs. Carroll, as she offered you could board and room there all the time, if you wished; but it's much better if you can manage to go back and forth each day."

"Well, that's fine then, for where we stop I'm sure the lady wouldn't have room for anyone else," Elyse put in.

"What time do you generally leave in the mornings?" Betty then asked.

"We try to be on our way each morning by seven thirty," Robby answered her. "Be sure and take your lunch with you, and we often take things we can heat on the stove in the basement, like soup and such."

"Okay, I'll be at your gate at seven thirty tomorrow morning," Betty assured them, then she asked, "Do you kids want to go out and see my pony? Anyway, I'll have to rig up something to carry all my books in."

"We can manage the books easily enough, between the three

of us," Elyse assured her. "But do let's go see your pony!" She turned to Mom and said, "We'll see you and Mr. Mann before we leave."

The three youngsters left the house for the barn, but on the way they heard a din out by the granary, so they walked over to see what was going on. They found Johnny, Billy, Margie, Jan, and Trusty the dog engaged in a game of Ante-ante-I-over. Johnny and Billy played against Margie, Jan and Trusty. Jan was too little to do much but laugh and scream with glee; Trusty was good at catching the ball, but he was such a fool he wouldn't let anyone have it to go tag with. Seeing them, Margie hollered, "How about giving me a hand, Robby?"

"We're just on our way to the barn to have a look at Betty's pony, but when we get back we'll play a couple of games. Is that all right?"

"Okay, but hurry up!" the youngsters chorused after them.

Inside the barn it was warm and full of the pungent odor familiar to horse barns; there was the smell of fresh straw, used to bed the stock down; the fermented, sharp tang of green oatsheaves, which the contented horses were munching; and over all the musty smell of dried hay stacked in the mow. From the back of the barn came a soft neigh, as Ponto sensed Betty's presence.

"Okay, boy!" she called to him.

"Say, your Dad has some fine-looking animals here," Robby commented. "Shows he takes good care of them."

"Oh, Pop loves his stock! They must always have the very best of care. Easy, Ponto! I've brought you some company." The cream-colored, wall-eyed pinto started dancing around his stall.

"Golly! what a beauty!" Robby exclaimed.

"He acts pretty fresh," Elyse said. "You must be a good rider to handle him, Betty."

"Yes, he's fresh, and foxy too," she admitted. "He doesn't mean any harm, but he's so darn quick, he sometimes takes me unawares. He imagines he sees things along the roadside." She walked into the stall, and started to pet him. He nuzzled at her.

"Come on in! He won't hurt you as long as I'm in the stall. But I don't think he could be trusted too far with strangers when he's on his own."

"Easy, boy," Robby said, as he eased in beside Betty. "Gosh! The kids are sure going to envy you! Not one has such a beauty!"

"Don't you want to come in too, Elyse?" Betty asked.

"No, I'll just admire him from here. I like my horses gentle-like; especially I like them to at least look gentle, and that fellow has the devil in his eye. Now who is this chap over here? He's more my style!"

"That's Margie's Puck . . . shortened from Pucker, on account of the worried frown on his face. He was a mess when Pop got him, but she's pampered him back to health; he even acts frisky once in a while now," Betty informed her.

Elyse walked into his stall and started petting him. As soon as Elyse was out of sight, Robby looked at Betty and said, "The Princess and her charger. It's going to take a bit of striving to keep ahead of you, or even up to you, but I'm sure going to try anyway. You don't mind, do you, Betty?"

"I guess I know what you mean Robby, but it makes me kind of uncomfortable, so let's go back down, and give Margie a hand with her game." She tried to leave the stall, but Robby was in front of her, and he just stood there gazing at her. Then Betty called out, "What are you doing, Elyse?"

Elyse came into view again, and she gave Robby a peculiar look, but he just laughed and said, "Okay, girls, we promised Margie we wouldn't be long, so let's go, shall we?"

When they joined the other kids, Margie suggested Robby and Elyse be on her side, and Betty could help Johnny and Billy. Betty spoke up and said, "A fat chance we've got against them, but then we might get lucky, boys, so let's go!"

"Ante-ante-I-over!" The ball practically fell straight into Betty's outstretched hands. She streaked around the granary and tagged Elyse. This really took them unawares, as they had not expected them to catch the very first ball. They went back to their side, and took Elyse with them. Betty tossed the ball to Johnny to throw. Nothing happened, and soon the words

chorused out, "Ante-ante-I-over! A miss! Shoot the luck!" The game continued, and finally Johnny caught the ball; he flew to the other side, and after Margie. She lost her footing and went down in a heap, Trusty on top of her first, then Johnny. Laughing and trying to unscramble themselves, they struggled to their feet. "Boy! You sure brought us luck, Betty!" Johnny exclaimed.

Now just Robby and Trusty held down the fort on the south side of the granary. Over came the ball, and he caught it; around the building and straight after Betty he dashed. She was no match for him, and soon his arms closed around her. Both were laughing and gasping for breath, but he managed to whisper, "See how I'm always going to be catching you, Princess? So you might as well give up!"

Betty shook him off, her eyes like flashing blue steel, and she hissed, "You keep your hands off me! Trying to make something out of even a kids' game!" She was ready to add more, but just then Mom's high voice floated across the yard to them, "Children! Will you come on into the house?"

Robby shook blond curls out of his eyes, as if coming out of a trance. "Why, gosh darn her!" he mumbled. "Who does she think she is?" Most of the girls he knew were willing to keep him interested. He followed the group to the house still trying to think it out.

Mom met them at the door and said, "So much exercise must have stirred up some healthy appetites. Elyse, you and your brothers will join us, won't you?"

"Oh, I don't think so, Mrs. Mann! There's so many of us, and I am sure Mother is expecting us home."

"I especially wanted you to stay," Mary told her. "You see, where the children have been living, there were never any young folks popping in on a Sunday. This is exactly like I've always wanted it to be, so please stay, won't you? I'll let the girls come over to your place real soon to return the visit."

"When you put it that way, Mrs. Mann, it sounds like we really should stay," Robby answered, "but Sis is right, we're quite a mob, and I warn you there's nothing delicate about our appetites, especially Johnny, Billy, and myself."

"That will be just fine, then," Mom exclaimed. "You and

the boys wash up, then gab with Pat and Jack. Elyse, you bring yourself a chair in here, while we put the finishing touches to the supper."

"Thank you, Mrs. Mann, but isn't there something I can do?" Elyse offered.

"Not right this minute anyway, Elyse." Mom turned to Betty and said, "Dear, take a light, and go into the cellar, and bring up a two-quart jar of those wild raspberries we brought from Minnesota." As she saw Betty's eyes open with amazement, she laughed and said, "Don't have a stroke, dear! I've been saving them for a very special occasion, and this is it! Loretta, make two heaping plates of that cake; Margie, you bring one light and one dark loaf of bread from the pantry. Janet, sweet, get out from under Mother's feet! Please run in the other room with Pop and the boys." Mary stood cutting wafer-thin slices of cold roast beef; she was in the height of her glory, with a houseful of company. Just like when she and Pat were first married, and all their families came visiting. She hadn't realized until this minute how much she had missed it all. She turned to Elyse and said, "I'm sorry I didn't invite your mother and father too, but next time we'll make up for it, and all be together."

Betty returned with the jar of fruit, and struggled as she tried to remove the lid. "Put it in some hot water," Mom suggested, as she watched her work at it. "Here, Margie, let me finish that bread, you're making tremendous slices. You're supposed to keep the knife going straight, dear. Just look at that last slice, it's practically an inch and a half thick on one side."

"Mom, I can't get this sealer open," Betty finally said. So Mom tried it, but it wouldn't budge; then Loretta twisted at it, but nothing happened, so Mom called out, "Pat, will either you or Jack come here, and see if you can open this sealer of fruit?" With that she started to laugh. "What's so funny?" Pat asked as he entered the kitchen.

"Why, I just caught myself talking like a real Canuck!"

"How's that?" he asked.

"Calm as you please, I said, 'sealer of fruit,' and I've never called it anything but a 'jar of fruit' before."

"Well, there's hope for you yet," and he laughed as he set

his big paw over the lid. Twist! "There!" he exclaimed. "A baby could have opened that." He set the jar down, flexed his biceps, and patted his chest.

"Don't explode right here in the kitchen," Mary snapped, "and spoil the whole supper. Come on in folks! Come and see the mighty, muscular giant! Right this way, folks, right over here!" she chanted, like a regular circus barker. Jack, Robby, and the boys crowded into the kitchen to see what was so funny.

Pat looked stunned for a minute, then he shouted, "Why, you . . . !" and made a lunge for Mary.

She evaded him, and started for the back stairway, but he caught her right at the door. "Pay up woman!" he said, as he whiskered her face.

"Pat Mann! Stop making a clown of yourself in front of the children," Mary gasped, as she struggled to get loose.

"Oh, first I'm the muscle-man, now I'm the clown!" he retorted. "What price must she pay, kids?" He held her tight in his arms, but added, "Hurry up with your decision, though, as I'm beginning to believe I've gotten into the lion's cage."

Everyone was laughing so hard they could hardly speak, but Betty finally gasped, "You're the reigning king for the night, and she's your slave. She must serve you your supper, like a real slave is supposed to."

"Good idea!" Pat agreed. He put his cheek against hers and said, "My beautiful slave, go serve your lord and master his food." He released his hold on her, and between gasps, as she tried to catch her breath, she finally got out, "What a crazy family I have! Our company will think we've all gone daft. There's never a moment's peace in this house! All of you get in to the table, and find your places, and as I'm the slave I'll serve." Robby glanced at Mom and thought: She doesn't act a bit mad, after all that mauling. What wonderful people they really are; I've never known anyone like them before.

They all trooped in to the table, and Pat seated everyone, then took his place. They could hear Mom taking up the crisped, browned potatoes, then the lid clattered into the teapot. They

waited in silence for her to make her appearance. There she was now, with her hands full of dishes; her head wrapped in a white dishtowel, turban fashion; and draped around her middle was a huge turkish towel. She made straight for Pat, and offered him the heaped bowls of food, saying as she did so, "I serve you, my lord and master!" Everyone was so tickled with her appearance that they howled with laughter again, but Pat finally managed to gasp, "You're wonderful darling! But now you are fired, so please, my dear, take your rightful place at the other end of the table."

"Thank you, my lord!" she replied, and made a graceful curtsey to him.

After they stabled their ponies, Betty, Elyse, and Robby walked toward the school. Betty saw before her a fairly large, brick structure, three stories high, and by far the most imposing school she had ever attended. She turned to Elyse and remarked, "I'm nervous as a cat! What if they should demote me again, the same as they did when we came from the States to Coulee Hill?"

"Oh, I'm sure they won't," Elyse assured her, "but I didn't know you were from the States. I've never known anyone from there before . . . but you're just the same as we are!"

"In heaven's name, Sisl! What did you expect? Indians or something?" Robby questioned Elyse. "Americans are no different than we are!"

"When I get older, one of the things I'm going to attempt to do is create a better acquaintance between Canadian and American people," Betty told them.

"Well, there is good friendship betwen them, isn't there?" Robby asked.

"Oh, yes, I don't mean that! It's just that the Canadian people don't seem to know much about the States, and the American people don't know one province from the other. That is, most of them don't, anyway."

"This is where we leave you, Robby," Elyse put in. "We'll continue our conversation re Canadians and Americans later. See you at lunchtime, Bud!"

Robby continued on down the hallway to his class, and Betty and Elyse entered a long, narrow cloakroom. Here they left their outer garments, also their lunchboxes. Entering the classroom, Betty saw approximately forty boys and girls about her own age occupying the seats. Elyse motioned for her to follow, and made straight for the teacher's desk. "Mr. Wilson, please may I present a new pupil, Betty Mann," she said when they reached the desk.

Mr. Wilson had been pouring over some class papers, and had not noticed their entrance. He looked up now, and straight into Betty's eyes. His gaze seemed to see right through her, and she started to tremble. Anyway, she had not expected a man teacher; Elyse should have warned her. Then a broad grin spread over his face, and the corners of his eyes crinkled up; he arose and extended his hand and said, "How do you do, Miss Mann! I had heard there was a new family in the neighborhood, and wondered if any children were of school age."

"How do you do, sir," Betty managed to reply, then added, "Yes, there are three of us, myself and two sisters. One of them is going to the local country-school, and the other is too young for school yet."

"That's just fine! I see I can plan on having a Miss Mann attend my classes off and on for several years to come," and he laughed, then turned to the rest of the class and said, "Class! I want you to meet Miss Betty Mann, who is going to be your new classmate. You can acquaint yourselves during lunchtime. Now, let's see, I guess you can sit over there in the third row, third seat from the front, Miss Mann." He walked down with her, and when they reached the aisle he said, "This is Robert, more commonly known as Butch, my kid brother, and then behind you here is Ada Myers." Each youngster acknowledged the introduction, and as he turned back to Betty he added, "I'll bring down the proper blanks for you to fill out later."

"Thank you, Mr. Wilson," she mumbled, as she was in a sort

of daze. First Mr. Wilson had embarrassed her, addressing her as Miss, and of course the whole class was gawping at her. She looked over at Elyse, and was glad to see a friendly grin on her face; also, she lifted a hand displaying crossed fingers, meaning "good luck."

Most of Betty's morning was filled with preliminary work. First she filled out the proper registration blanks; then Mr. Wilson called her to his desk, and they went over the subjects she had been taking. He asked her a great many questions, but seemed satisfied that she was advanced enough, and also had the credits necessary, to be in his class. Then he told her, "In some of the subjects you are a few chapters ahead, and in some a few behind. I'll make a list for you from my notes here, and you pick it up before you go home; then you can do a bit of home study on the ones you are behind in. Later on I'll give you an oral examination to make sure you understand it all."

"Thank you, Mr. Wilson, that will be fine," she replied, so he excused her and she returned to her seat.

During their lunch hour, she met so many she couldn't begin to remember who they all were. But they all treated her very nicely, and she could not help but compare how different it was from when they made their first acquaintance with Canadian schools at Coulee Hill.

Such a bunch of kids! Over half of the school brought their lunches, just as Robby, Elyse, and Betty had. They were congregated in the gymnasium, in the basement of the school. The din was terrific, but Betty thrilled to it all, as everyone was making her feel so at home. She received a host of invitations, as there seemed to be something doing all the time. Skating parties being planned, to take place soon; the school play for Christmas; a Saturday afternoon tea; a church bazaar; and so on went the plans.

Robby spoke up and said, "Talking about skating parties, I'm clearing off the pond at the coulee bridge this Saturday. The ice is thick enough now. How about some of you coming out Sunday for a skate?"

"Oh Robby, how lovely!" exclaimed a tiny blonde girl. "You

promised to teach me how to skate this winter, remember?"

"Terry! Cut it out, will you?" Ada admonished. "You skate as well as you ever will. Robby can't spend every winter trying to teach you something you'll never be good at. Give some of the rest of us a chance, eh?"

"Jealous cat!" Terry hissed at her.

Robby ignored both girls, and turned to Betty and asked, "You skate, don't you?"

"Yes, and do I love it! By the way, do you mean that pond in the coulee, right there by our gate?"

"Yes, that's the one," Elyse answered. "We skate there every winter, until the rink opens in town." Then she turned to the group around her and said, "Don't you girls forget to get some food together to bring along, then later we'll go to the house for a feed. Oh, golly! There's the bell; time to get back to the grind, kids! Come on, Betty." She linked her arm in Betty's, and as they started to mount the stairs, she asked, "Well, what do you think of your new school and its inmates?"

"I'm fairly in a dither, Elyse, so much has happened, and I've met so many, that I really don't know one from the other; but they all seem very nice."

"Oh, there's some are a pain in the neck, but the general run are pretty nice kids," Elyse said.

During supper that night, Margie and Betty ran one another a race, trying to get in all the details of their first day at school, and attempted to give the family a word-by-word picture of all that took place. Janet was all ears. Finally she piped up and wanted to know, couldn't she go with Margie tomorrow, as she was certain she was missing a very good time. Mom tried to explain to her that she was too small for school yet, but she could not understand why, so for several mornings thereafter, she bawled her eyes out when Margie left without her.

The weather held, and Sunday was a bright, cold day, with the sun gleaming on the snow. As far as the eye could see, it looked as if the earth were studded with a million diamonds.

Mary stood at the window and peeped through a small spot, which wasn't covered with lacy frost. She turned to the girls and remarked, "Guess Pop and Jack are going down to give Robby a hand clearing the pond, as they just passed down the lane with the team and stoneboat." The girls dashed to the west window, and sure enough, there was the big team, puffing out great pillars of steam from their nostrils, and Pop and Jack standing straddle-legged on the boat. They could even hear Pop's whistle as they passed the house.

"Gosh! Let's hurry and get these dishes done, so we can go down too," Margie suggested. "Maybe we can get in a good skate this morning, before the others arrive."

As they prepared to leave the house, Mom suggested they take a couple of brooms from the porch to sweep the ice clean, after the men had gone over it with the boats. She had seen men use large brushes to do that, at the rinks.

When they reached the coulee bridge, they found a gang there already. Pop and Robby were going up and down, with their teams and boats. Each had a long plank attached across the front of the boats, and were pushing the snow closer and closer to the banks with each trip across. Jack, Johnny, and Billy each had a large scoop-shovel, which they pushed along the ice, picking up what was left after the boats passed. On the north side, they saw Don and Elyse sweeping for all they were worth. They stood and watched for a while, then Betty suggested they go on down and get busy too. "Hi, gang!" she called. Everyone looked up, and sent along a cheery hello, but started to threaten them with all sorts of dire things if they didn't hurry and get to work.

As they came down the bank near Elyse and Don, Elyse said, "I was hoping you kids would bring some more brooms. Isn't it going to be fun when it's all cleared?"

"It sure is," Betty admitted, then added, "I didn't think it was nearly so large; look how it runs away down there in the pasture. Are they going to scrape that too? It must be almost a quarter of a mile long, isn't it?"

"Yes, I guess it is about that long," Don answered. "I'm sure Robby will clear it too, as he always has, for he says it makes a good racing-strip, for those who want to compete."

Margie found herself a shovel, and went along to join the boys. Betty swept away with her broom, but in a short while she tossed it down in exasperation and said, "It'll take a year with that danged little thing! I'm going up and fetch Pop's barn brushes."

"They will be better," Elyse admitted. "Why didn't I think to bring ours along too?"

Betty started back to the house on the run, and was soon back dragging the huge, barn brushes; the sweeping went along much faster with them. Everyone worked hard all morning, then finally there it was, all finished—the glossy ice gleaming in the sun.

Robby came along the bank with his team and boat. He said hello to Margie and Betty, then suggested to his gang that they had better be getting along home to dinner. Elyse, Don, and the boys piled on the boat with him, calling back as they left, to hurry right back after dinner.

"Come on, kids!" Pat yelled. "Let's go along too, and find out what Mom and Loretta have to offer a bunch of starving hyenas." They all stampeded into the kitchen, making a great clatter. The girls' cheeks were like red, rosy apples, from the cold and exercise.

"Golly! I'll bet you're all starved," Mom exclaimed. Then, as they seated themselves at the table, she inquired, "Did you get it all cleared?"

"Yes, it's all finished! And you should see it glittering there in the sun! It's a picture, I can tell you!" Pat exclaimed. "You'll have to come along down after dinner, Mary. Jack and I gathered a whole stack of wood, so we can have a roaring big bonfire."

"A big fire will be nice," Mary admitted, then added, "I plan to come along with you, and see it."

"Wish you had some skates; I'd give you a few lessons," Pat offered.

"Teach me to skate? Don't be funny, dear! I've not been on skates since I was a kid, and I haven't the slightest notion of

being on them either," she laughed, then asked, "Are you by any chance planning to try your talents?"

"Why, certainly, if I can find a pair to fit me. What's so funny about that? To hear you, one would think I was half dead, with one foot in the grave already!"

"Okay, dear, don't get huffy! But I can guarantee you will be half dead tomorrow if you skate today. Why, you haven't been on skates in years!"

"Gee, Mom! You should see how big it is!" Betty put in, with an effort to change the subject, and stave off the argument brewing between Pat and Mary.

Mary turned her attention to her, and said, "I'll bet it is nice, and is going to be heaps of fun; let's hurry and finish, so we can get started. By the way, how about having 'the gang,' as you call them, here later instead of going to the Stewarts? It will be closer, and I want to meet them all, anyway."

"Golly! That will be fine, Mom! I wanted to suggest it, but was afraid it would make too much work for you. Wish we had a piano, though, so we could have a sing, and a few dances."

"Well, we can crank up the old Victrola," Pat suggested. "There's several records can be used for dancing. Guess I'm going to have to dig out my old fiddle, and do some practicing. Haven't played the thing since we left Minnesota, but guess I haven't forgotten. Maybe you could accompany me on the zither, Mary; remember how we used to play duets?"

"Don't be silly, Pat!" and she laughed at his suggestion. "Zithers are out of style nowadays, and anyway I likely couldn't even play a chord on it."

"How exciting!" Betty gushed, "I remember now, you used to play, Pop, but I'd forgotten it completely."

"Geel An orchestra right in our own home!" Margie enthused.

"Well, I wouldn't exactly call it an orchestra, would you, Mary? Wait until you hear it, and perhaps it won't sound so exciting." Pat laughed, and there was a twinkle in his eye as he looked at Mary. He was remembering quite far back, she was sure; she smiled to let him know that she remembered too.

Just before they left the house for the pond, Pat said, "I just think Jack and I'll cart along the old Victrola and records; maybe some of the kids would enjoy skating to music."

"That's a nice idea," Mary answered, "for music has a way with people, helps bring them together or something."

"Bring a couple of robes with you, Mary, so you don't get chilled sitting down there," he called from the doorway.

"Guess I better at that. Thanks, darling, for the reminder."

"Well I have to look after my sweetheart, don't I?"

"Yes dear, and I love it," she told him as she followed him out of the door.

When they neared the pond, they saw at least twenty-five or thirty horses tied in the bluff, each with a warm blanket tossed over it. Along the side of the road were every known kind of transportation: bobsleds, cutters, and even a big hayrack, filled with hay. They came out on the bridge above the pond, and looked down on at least fifty or sixty young people. Some were already on skates, and skimmed back and forth over the ice. Others were seated around the big fire, which Jack had got started, and were putting on their boots and skates. The young folks had gone on ahead down the bank, to join the group, but Mary and Pat stood awhile on the bridge and watched.

Mary finally remarked, "Oh, Pat, it does my heart good to see them there, all having such a lovely time together."

"Faith, and it's a sight for sore eyes, isn't it, now? You know we Irish were never intended to be alone in this old world. 'The more the merrier' is an old expression which applies to us, in every sense of the word."

"Yes, Pat, people are wonderful, and especially young people are wonderful, aren't they? I'm so very glad we decided to leave Coulee Hill, and move down here."

"I'm glad we did, too! Let's go on down and join the bunch, shall we? Be careful of that bank, though, it's dang slippery!" he cautioned, as Mary moved off the bridge and started down ahead of him.

When they joined the group around the fire, they were greeted

as if they were long lost friends. Mr. and Mrs. Stewart were seated there, and they suggested that Mary sit beside them. Then introductions started, and Mary had a hard time keeping up with them.

She looked out over the ice, and was astounded to see how well all the young folks skated; almost as if they were professionals, instead of just a neighborly group gathered together. Her eyes followed Margie and Betty; funny she hadn't realized before how good they were. Her mind wandered off to that first Christmas, and how they had scrimped to buy their first skates. She was glad now that they had done so.

Little Jan was screaming for Pop to come and give her a hand as she struggled to put on an old pair of Margie's skates, which she had outgrown. He finally answered her and told her to wait a minute, until he got the music going. He had set the machine up near Mary, so she could change the records, and wind it each time. When the music started, the crowd gathered around, to exclaim, and ask who had such a brilliant idea. Pat fairly beamed, and Mary hoped he wasn't going to explode right there and then, with all the praise being showered on him. The music carried well, too, as the high banks on each side made a sort of amphitheater for it. It worked like a charm on the skaters, and they started pairing off, and skated in time to it. Some were actually dancing. Mary noticed. "Here, Pat," she said, "take these extra socks, and go give Jan a hand, before she throws a complete fit over there."

Robby skated after Betty, and as she caught a glimpse of him over her shoulder she took off down the long, narrow strip. But he finally overtook her, and his arms closed around her. Both were laughing, and panting for breath; then there was silence between them, as they stared into each other's eyes. Then Robby leaned forward and planted a kiss upon her parted lips, and whispered, "My pretty Princess!" He started to say more, but Betty came to with a start, and tried to free herself from his arms. "Oh, Robby! You shouldn't have done that!" she said, but not very sternly; yet she knew she should put him in his

place. But how could you be angry when there were tingles running up and down your spine and your arms and limbs, making them feel as if they were made out of jelly.

"Maybe I shouldn't have done that, Betty, but I couldn't seem to help myself. I haven't wanted to do anything else since the first day I saw you. Remember, when I came over, and you were all having coffee, and enjoying your lovely cake?"

"Yes, I remember, Robby, but please let's skate back now, and join the others. They'll be wondering where we are, and Mom will be sure to miss me. Thank goodness for that wide curve back there, and the high banks, otherwise everyone would have seen you."

"You're right, thank goodness for them, for I'm sure I would have kissed you right then, even if the whole world had been looking. Okay, let's skate back, shall we? But don't forget you're my girl!"

"What do you mean, your girl?" she demanded. "Don't go getting possessive! I hate people who order me around! Just remember even though I like you very much, that doesn't give you any privileges!"

"Betty, please don't scold me," he pleaded. "I'll try not to act possessive, but I can't seem to help myself much."

"Oh, stop it, ninny!" With that she whirled on her skates, sent a shower of shaved ice over him, and called over her shoulder, "Come on, I'll race you back to the fire!"

Robby shook his head, as if coming out of a trance, and started down the ice after her. He laughed softly to himself, and thought: She sure has her moods! One minute I'm a ninny, the next challenged to a race! At least life would never be dull around her!

Betty had a good start, so there was no chance of Robby catching her, but she still did not slacken her speed, and as she streaked toward the bank, where the fire was, she bumped into Butch Wilson. He threw out an arm and caught her, then demanded, "Where the heck you been? I've been looking all over for you! How about a turn around the ice?"

"Oh, fine, Butch!" She laughed up into his face, as she sensed

Robby's presence at her elbow, then she exclaimed, "I've been looking forward to a skate with you, as I want to learn all those fancy steps I saw you doing with Ada," so they crossed hands and skated away.

"How about this waltz, Bud?" Elyse asked Robby. "Come on!" and she jerked his arm. When they were beyond hearing, she said, "For gosh sakes, Rob! Snap out of it! You're acting real goofy. Can't you shake that look in your eyes? It worries me to see you in such a trance."

"Sorry, Sis! I'm a mess, I guess, but I don't seem to be able to help myself very much. Wish I could, as I don't care for myself like this at all."

"Well try, will you?" she pleaded. "Ask some of the other girls to skate, or talk to them . . . at least do something except stand and stare! Betty seems to be having a good time. She's not missing out skating with all the boys here, so I'd think you could do the same."

Betty really was having a wonderful time; she had skated with nearly all the boys, when a tall, dark, good-looking boy came up beside her, and asked, "Would you skate with me, Miss Mann?"

She looked up into piercing black eyes, and said, "You're Will Hemlock, aren't you?"

"Yes, I am," he hesitated, then added, "I've wanted to ask you all afternoon, but some of the girls don't care to be seen with Indian boys."

"Why not? I've heard your father is chief of your tribe at the reservation," she replied. "Yes I'll skate with you, and you can always feel free to ask me, or talk to me at any time."

They skated along the north bank, and then out onto the long, narrow strip. Robby, watching, seethed with jealousy, and under his breath said, "Now that darn Indian! I suppose I'm going to have trouble, with him sticking around."

"You are a very good skater, Miss Mann," Will offered, after they had skated almost the full length of the strip.

"Why the 'Miss Mann'? You're in class with me at school, and all the other kids call me Betty, why don't you?"

"If I might, I would like that so much," he answered very precisely. "I always try not to be forward, as most white girls resent it. I don't feel any different than the rest of you, but there is that line, which so few allow you to cross. However, the French families seem to have a deeper understanding about it, and we are accepted by a great many of them."

"That's stupid, I think," Betty retorted, "but if you feel so strongly about it, why didn't you go to the regular Indian School at Lebret?"

"I do feel strongly about it, and that's the reason I wanted to go to the school in town, to see if there might be some way in which the barrier could be broken down eventually."

"Well, you and I have something rather in common, although my problem isn't exactly like yours, for there is no barrier. Mine is just lack of good acquaintance."

"Tell me about it, Betty," he suggested, and slowed their pace.

"Oh, it will perhaps bore you, but it is to try and better acquaint the peoples of the United States and Canada. It is surprising how little one knows of the other. You see I'm from the States, and I didn't know one thing about Canada or the Canadian people. That is, how fine they are, and that actually there is no difference between them. Of course I was pretty young, but still most of the people of the States don't know much about Canada. I'm sure if you asked just any ordinary person where Saskatchewan was, he'd shake his head in dismay. Oh, for gosh sakes! I'm making a speech," and she hesitated to catch her breath.

"No, you're not speechmaking! What you have said is good, and do keep at it always. When I think of it, we're really all one country, and why shouldn't we be like one big family," Will answered her.

"That's what I mean, but don't know when I'll ever be able to do anything about it. We had better start skating back to join the rest of the group, hadn't we?"

"Yes, we better." And he put his words into action, and swung out with long sweeps toward the fire. Finally he said, "I'll see you at class Monday, Betty."

"At class? Aren't you coming up to the house to eat?" she asked.

"I think not, Betty. Maybe some other time."

"Well, suit yourself, but you're welcome, you know, if you would care to come," she offered.

As they neared the fire, Pop called to her, so she told Will so long. As she neared Pop he said, "Mom and Mrs. Stewart and some of the girls have gone up to the house to prepare the food; don't you think you and Loretta should trot along and give them a hand?"

"Gosh! Is it that late, Pop? Sure, we'll go along right away," and she called to Loretta to come on. She seated herself on the bank to remove her skates, and Loretta did likewise, then they both left for the house.

As they walked along, Betty said, "Oh, what a perfect day!" She heaved a sigh, then added, "Gosh, but I'm sure tired!"

"It was fun, wasn't it? I don't ever remember having such a good time. I'm sure a lucky girl, and especially I was lucky the day Dr. Clark suggested I come to help Mom," Loretta said. "Wonder where I'd be? I'm sure somewhere not having such a lovely time, and with such a wonderful family."

"Well, we would perhaps be as badly off, if you weren't around. Would sure seem funny! And you earn your salt, I guess, Sis."

When they came into the yard, they found the house ablaze with lights, and as they opened the door a din of voices met them.

"Oh, there you are, girls," Mom said by way of greeting. "Hurry and get ready to help. You two can pull the table out; and put in all the leaves, will you? I'm making the coffee." Mary was rushing here and there like someone possessed. She turned to Mrs. Stewart and demanded, "How am I going to manage to seat them? As many as are down there, I'll have to set the table at least five or six times."

"Take it easy, Mary," Anita Stewart suggested in her quiet voice. "We won't set the table at all; just pile all the food on it, and put the plates in a stack, and some silverware, and let them

help themselves. Then they can find their own place to sit or just stand. You don't have to worry over these youngsters. They'll be underfoot so much you'll sometimes wish they were in Halifax."

Mary looked up startled, but saw that Anita's eyes twinkled with laughter. "I was being rather daffy, wasn't I? Dashing here and there like a chicken with its head cut off. I feel better now, though," she said, then added, "Thanks, Anita."

If there had been a din before it was nothing to equal the uproar when the gang started to pour into the house. There were not enough hooks to hang their coats and sweaters, so there was just a great stack in the corner by the stairway. Out on the porch, another great pile of overshoes, boots, and skates.

Winter came with all its fury! Some days the sun shone so brightly it was almost blinding, but other days were filled with the winter's madness. The wind would come up and howl and howl around the house, and through the barren trees. But, all considered, the Manns were much more comfortable than in the small house at Coulee Hill, set out on the open prairie, with no protection whatsoever. Here the buildings set in their hollow were protected. Although the snow drifted badly in spots, other places were entirely bare.

Pat and Jack worked mostly inside, as they repaired buildings or fanned grain for the seeding. Mary and Loretta had long, lazy days, to sew and do fancy work; Betty had to stay in town a couple of times, on account of storms; Margie rode each day to school, with Johnny and Billy, in their cutter; Janet was the most dissatisfied, especially when she had to stay indoors, but if the men were working inside some building, that was where you were sure to find her.

The holiday season had been quite uneventful, as there had been a raging blizzard most of the time, and the many parties planned had to be postponed until later. However, the weather held until the last day of school, so the children had been able to present their Christmas concerts.

Living so closely to one another, the Stewarts and Manns had been able to get together several times during the holiday season. The Manns were invited to the Stewarts for Christmas dinner, so at New Year's Mary had the Stewarts over for dinner and the day. The Stewart family did not seem to have relatives living near by either, so it made a nice arrangement for the two families.

The news from the war front was not good; so many men being slaughtered, and every day brought more enlistments. Even the younger boys talked of nothing else now; Jack had promised to stay until the crops were planted, but then there would be no holding him back any more. Not even pleas from Loretta would change his mind. He saw his duty and would have hated himself if he had not done it.

Toward spring, when everyone was able to get out more, the dances and parties started again, but everything was being given to raise money to send to the front. The women in the neighborhood had started a sewing circle, and sewed or knitted for some worthy cause. They met each week at one home or the other, had afternoon tea, chatted, and sewed. It really was a worthy cause in more ways than one, as it gave many of them an opportunity to get out, which they would not have done otherwise. They nearly all had small children, so one of them took a turn each week and tended them; thus for at least a part of one day some mothers were free, and actually able to forget their babies for a while.

Besides knitting and sewing things to send to the boys, they made aprons, pot-holders, pillowcases, and often had quilting bees; then once each month they got their work all together and gave a bazaar and a tea to raise money. These were usually held in one of the church basements on a Saturday afternoon. As nearly all of them went into town on Saturday to do their week's shopping, and to dispose of their produce of butter, eggs, and so on, it was the ideal time to hold these functions. Saturday in town was an event everyone looked forward to, as you saw neighbors you did not see otherwise.

Here and there in the bluffs, and along the north sides of the buildings, there were still dirty patches of snow, but otherwise it was all gone. The air was full of the secret whisperings of spring. It could even be heard, it seemed, if one stood quite still and listened. The trees nodded hello to one another, after their long winter sleep; even the ground, as it got ready to shoot forth its green blades again, was alive and moving. In the coulee the stream bubbled jubilantly along, and as it nudged at the roots of the willows on its banks it seemed to be saying, "Wake up! Wake up! Hurry up! Hurry up!"

"Betty! Did you see that?" Margie asked as she dashed along the bank of the stream.

"See what? What did you see, Margie?"

"Golly! I'm sure I saw a big whopper of a fish! It splashed right over there by that rock!"

"Oh, look, right there!" Betty exclaimed. "I saw one too! Let's go tell Pop, and maybe he can tell us how to catch them!"

The girls had been wandering in the coulee, looking for crocuses, and possibly some early violets, but in the excitement over the fish they forgot everything else, and started for the house on the run.

One look at what was taking place around the house would verify that spring was certainly here. Pat and Jack were busy removing the banking from around the base of the house. Many a cold draft it kept out during the winter, and also kept the cellar from freezing. As they moved around the house they removed the storm windows, then Mary and Loretta followed with buckets of water and cloths to wash the windowpanes as soon as the storm windows were removed. There was really a sense of freedom in the house, to be able to look through sparkling, clean windowpanes again, or when they could be opened wide to let in the soft, spring breezes.

Pat looked up as both girls dashed up, out of breath, and he asked, "Well, what's chasing you two? I thought you simply had to look for flowers, just when your mother wanted you to help with the windows."

"Oh, Pop, guess what? There are big fish coming up the coulee stream," Margie finally got out.

"You imagined it, chicken," he answered, shoveling again.

"No, Pop, Margie is right, for I saw them too!" Betty put in. "We were wondering how we could catch them, for they're going too fast to get on a hook and line."

"I still think you saw something else, but Jack and I can dump this load down that way, and we'll take a look to satisfy you."

As soon as the stoneboat was full again, the two men and both girls, plus Janet, who decided she was missing something, started back down the coulee. Mary called, "Betty, you be sure and keep your eyes on Jan; don't let her out of your sight!"

"Okay Mom, I'll keep a tight hold of her," Betty replied, as she reached for one of Jan's hands, and Margie took the other. When the men finished unloading, Pat said, "Okay, come on now, and show us where you think you saw the fish."

The girls led the way back, and then they stood on the bank for quite a while, and nothing happened. Pat was just ready to tell them they had imagined things, when he saw a big fellow headed toward him. He almost toppled into the water, he got so excited. He turned and dashed up the bank—everyone followed him with their eyes—and when he reached the boat he picked up a pitchfork and ran back down again. He watched the stream again; another flash, and his fork went forward and lifted Mister Fish from the water and onto the bank. Everyone crowded around, and Pat exclaimed, "Gee, but he's sure a beauty! A couple more his size, and we can have a nice feed. One of you kids run up and get a gunny sack to put them in. Right inside the granary door, on your right!" he called after Margie, who was already on her way for the sack.

Sure enough, in a little while Pat had four good-sized fish, and they all started to the house. Everyone talked at once, as they tried to tell Mary and Loretta about it, and Mary would not believe it was true until actually shown the fish.

She stood and stared at them, then exclaimed, "Imagine! Fish right at your own back door!"

"What time is it?" Pat asked. Jack glanced at his watch and said, "Just ten thirty, Pat."

"Well then, I'll go scale these fish, and we can have them for dinner, right this noon. That okay, Mary?" he asked.

"Yes, dear, you go ahead," she answered, and she went back to help Loretta with the windows. She heard Betty in the house, so she called, "Betty, don't you think you better put some wood on the fire, and heat the irons, then press some of those skirts and dresses of yours and Margie's? I noticed you both looked pretty wrinkled all week."

"Yes, I'll get at it, Mom," she called back, but not very enthusiastically, as everything connected with housework seemed more or less a drudgery to her.

"That's fine, dear," Mom answered, then added, "See if you can't get some of that mud off the bottom of your riding skirt. It's a sight!"

"I'll try, Mom," the answer came back. Mary closed the window then, and continued polishing it. After a while she remarked to Loretta, "Betty sometimes worries me, as she's so uninterested in things. She doesn't have the slightest conception of what she wants to do when she grows up, and I don't seem to be able to put my finger on anything, either." She rambled on, as if talking to herself, "Of course she could be a schoolteacher, but she definitely doesn't have much patience with children. I'd be afraid she'd box the ears of one of them, and then have the parents on her neck."

"I've wondered about her too, Mom," Loretta put in. "I think she will want to do something before she marries, as she doesn't seem to have much patience with boys, either."

"I said something like that to Pat, and he told me to leave her alone. He said, 'Let her put the young jackanapes in their places.' It's what most of them deserve, he thinks." She moved over to another window, and as she reached up and pulled the top sash down, so that she could reach it, she heard Betty singing to herself. The youngster did have a nice voice, well modulated and full of resonance for one so young. Through her mind flitted

bits of conversation she had heard about an old Italian singing-teacher, who lived at the east end of town, and taught voice. The praises she had heard were good; she must inquire into it, and maybe Betty would be able to take some lessons. That of course would mean a piano, and they cost a great deal of money; then there would have to be piano lessons too, not only for Betty, but Margie and Loretta, and even little Jan, when she was older. She didn't see any way it could be done, but she made up her mind to talk to Pat about it. Maybe he would have some ideas on the matter.

The windows were finally all finished, and Mary and Loretta stood back and surveyed their work. Mary looked at Loretta, then said, "Well, that's a tedious job done, but it's one of the first things I like to do in the spring. Seems to cheer up the inside of the house, more than anything else, until one can get at the regular spring cleaning. Guess we better get ourselves in the house and start dinner. Pat must have already brought the fish."

That night, when everyone had retired, Mary and Pat chatted about this and that of the day's happenings, but Pat sensed something on Mary's mind, and finally he asked, "What you thinking about, honey? You just barely answer me. Anything worrying you, dear?"

"No, Pat, I'm not worried about anything." She hesitated for a few seconds, then asked, "Do you suppose it might be possible for us to see our way clear to buy a piano?"

"Why, I don't know, what does one cost?"

"A tremendous amount, Pat!" she answered. "Over five hundred dollars, I'm sure."

"Five hundred dollars! Are you crazy, Mary? Thought you were the one always preaching economy!"

"Yes, I generally do, dear, and I maybe shouldn't have even mentioned it, but today while washing the windows I heard Betty singing in the house, and I got to thinking about her taking voice lessons, as she does have a nice voice, and those thoughts naturally led to thoughts of a piano, and lessons for all the girls. Betty could hardly take voice lessons, and not have a piano for

practice. She's been on my mind lately, and like I was telling Loretta today, I'm sure she'd make a rotten schoolteacher, and I don't think she is going to be too interested in an early marriage. But let's skip the whole idea, as I can see now it's really beyond all reason."

"No, colleen, we won't skip it, we'll just put it away for a while at the back of our minds, to be brought out at a later date. It's much too nice an idea to be skipped," and he reached over and kissed her earnestly. "Just a kiss to seal our bargain, that we will work toward that goal," he whispered. "It would be wonderful if we could make it come true by vacation time; then they would have the whole summer ahead of them to take lessons and practice. No, dear, we won't give it up, we'll just put some whole-hearted concentration on the matter, and who knows?"

"Darling, you are the bestest ever," she told him, and gave him a tight squeeze. "You are always so understanding."

"I'd like to know how I could be any other way, when I have such a lovely incentive as you."

"Oh Pat, stop it! You're going to flatter me until I blow up and pop right out through the roof, then where will you be?"

"Not while I have my arms around you, you won't," he laughed, and put his words into effect.

"Go to sleep, you goose! I love you!" she whispered.

"Ponto! You bad, bad boy! Take it easy, fellow, you almost threw me," Betty exclaimed to the wall-eyed pinto. She was on her way to meet Elyse and Robby, and had been daydreaming, when the pony shied. She directed her conversation to him again: "Know who that gay, young fellow was? Well, he's a fine fellow, and you don't need to jump from him. You had better meet him formally; he is Mr. Robin Redbreast!" Then, to the gay robin in the tree, "Mr. Robin, please meet Mr. Ponto, a very bad pony." She giggled and let her gaze wander on ahead, and she thought: Oh wonderful, wonderful spring! Everything green and shimmering with beauty! She stopped the pony for a few minutes on the coulee bridge, and watched the stream as it

bubbled along over the rocks. Then, on her way again, she hummed to herself. Finally the hum found a tune, and then the tune found words:

“Spring is coming! Do you doubt it?
 See the fragrant flowers in bloom;
 Feel the warm wind from the South-land
 Sealing icy winter’s doom.
 Spring is coming! All earth’s teeming,
 Balmy odors scent the air,
 Resurrection! Resurrection!
 Earth awakens, oh how fair!” *

Elyse and Robby sat astride their ponies, and listened in awe. They had never heard Betty sing like that! Never heard her when she lifted her voice in sheer gladness, to the beautiful, bright morning!

As the pony cantered up to them, she called a cherry, “Good morning, kids!” They both acknowledged her greeting, then Elyse exclaimed, “Betty, that was beautiful! Why haven’t you sung for us before? We just sat here in a daze, didn’t we, Rob?” There was no answer from him, so she turned her head to look at him. “Rob!” she said sharply. “Snap out of it!”

“Oh! Excuse me, what did you say, Sis?”

“I’ll explain tomorrow,” she snapped.

“Hey! You two cut it out!” Betty put in. “Don’t go quarreling with one another on such a beautiful morning.”

Robby finally found his voice, and said, “There won’t be a quarrel, Princess! Sorry, Sis, but I guess I was overcome for a minute; now maybe I can manage to say that I enjoyed the song no end, Betty. It was beautiful, and sort of took my breath away. Wherever did you learn to sing like that?”

“Why, I didn’t learn anywhere, I always sing when I’m happy,”

* By Geo. N. Rockwell & Edwin A. Shaffer. Published 1896 by Lyric Music Co., Syracuse, N. Y.

she answered. "That's an old song I've heard Mom sing, and often Pop, too, on bright, beautiful mornings. I think it is an old American hymn or something."

"Well it certainly was nice, and what's more it fits the morning perfectly," Elyse offered.

"Guess what?" Betty asked. "I saw my first robin this morning. He really was responsible for the outburst, I guess."

But Elyse wouldn't be put off, or change the subject. She asked, "Why don't you try for the scholarship the school has up every year, for the best musician?"

"What scholarship? Guess I don't know anything about it, Elyse."

"I really don't know who sponsors it, but every year some student wins it. Guess Mr. Wilson could tell us, or Miss Bordeaux, who teaches the music class. Why don't we ask one of them?"

"Maybe we should, as it would be grand to have money for lessons; I'd like that," Betty agreed.

During their lunch hour, Elyse brought the subject up again, and suggested that when they were through eating they go see Miss Bordeaux, and ask about the scholarship anyway. Betty was a little shy about it all, but Elyse kept at her until she had her in the notion too.

Marguerite Bordeaux was sitting at her desk finishing her lunch when the two girls entered. They hesitated at the door; she glanced their way, then bid them come to her desk. She had a low throaty voice, with a decided French intonation. Betty was surprised to see such a tiny slip of a person; not more than twenty-three or twenty-five at the most. Big, black eyes, and a mass of black hair piled upon her head. She smiled, looked at Elyse, and said, "You are Elyse Stewart, aren't you? I've often thought you look more French than Scotch, with your dark eyes and those black curls, but your name says you are Scotch." Then she turned her gaze on Betty, and said, "But this young lady I do not know."

Elyse found her voice then and said, "Miss Bordeaux, this is Betty Mann. She is in class with me, in Mr. Wilson's room. She's only been going to school here about seven months."

"Seems I should have met you before this, Betty, but so many children . . . it is confusing, eh? But I am so pleased to meet you now. Is there something I can do for you girls?"

"Yes, Miss Bordeaux," Elyse answered. "Betty has a lovely voice, and I didn't even know it until this morning on the way to school. I've heard something about a scholarship for the music class, but not being musical myself, I couldn't tell her anything about it; but I thought you would be able to help us out."

"But of course . . . there is scholarship every year. Mr. Darby, the elderly and wealthy man, who lives back on the hill, gives the money, two hundred dollars each time. Then Signor Marchetti, the little Italian singing-teacher, gives one year's lessons free. You perhaps know Signor Tony, and his nice wife Carmella. No?"—both girls shook their heads in the negative—"But you are missing something, not to know them. They are jewels! Come to the piano, Betty, and let me hear. Just follow the notes up and down as I strike them."

At first her voice seemed stuck in her throat, but after a few attempts it rang out clear and true again. Up . . . up . . . up the scale, and then down again. Miss Bordeaux turned on the stool, and asked, "You have had lessons, yes?"

"No, I've never had any," Betty replied.

"No lessons? A natural voice! Ooo-la-la! You come to my class right away, eh? We do something about that voice!"

"I don't know, Miss Bordeaux, my subjects are all scheduled in Mr. Wilson's room, and maybe it wouldn't be possible, this late, to squeeze in a music class," Betty answered her.

"I will talk to Mr. Wilson, and we will manage some way for you to come with me. There is the bell, my cheril" she put her arm around Betty, and they walked over to join Elyse. "Thank you, Elyse, for bringing Betty to me. She is going to go a long way with that lovely voice, and I will be very glad to start her on that way."

Then the girls found themselves in the long hall, and on the way to their classroom, Elyse said, "See, I told you, Betty! Isn't she nice?"

"She's lovely," Betty admitted. "My, but she is a tiny thing, isn't she?"

"She may be tiny, but I understand she is mighty where music is concerned, and a regular slavedriver too, if she is at all interested in a pupil."

Finally it was arranged, between Mr. Wilson, Miss Bordeaux, and Mr. Hillary the principal, that Betty could drop her Arts class, and substitute music in Miss Bordeaux's room. Mary and Pat were greatly thrilled when Betty told them the news, and now it became even more urgent that they manage some way to get the piano. Then a solution offered itself, in the most unforeseen manner. A neighbor came by to see if Pat had any seed wheat he could sell, and Pat figured he could, but it would mean more work for Jack and himself, as they would have to set to and fan it after a long day in the fields. When Pat explained the reason to Jack, he was more than willing to help. They managed to clean up five hundred bushels, and even though it was dirty to start with it cleaned out and was a good grade, so Pat got the top price for it.

Pat and Mary decided they would keep the piano a secret until school was out in June, and then give it as a sort of graduation gift to all the girls.

Betty's spare time, such as her lunch hour, was spent with Miss Bordeaux. There was so much to learn, and especially she was trying to catch up on her theory, which the rest of the class had already completed.

She sat at the teacher's desk, and waited for her to complete correcting a paper she had finished the previous night. When Miss Bordeaux was through, she remarked, "You did very well with that, Betty. There are a few notes I have made on the margins. You go over them carefully, and I am sure you shall be ready for your examination of that particular part. You have work to keep you busy the rest of the week, yes?"

"I'm sure I have, Miss Bordeaux, but if I complete it, I'll let you know."

The teacher was quiet for a while, then asked, "You belong to a church, Betty?"

"Yes, we belong to the Presbyterian Church at Hillsby."

"Do they have a choir?" the teacher then inquired.

"Yes, they do. Why?"

"I was wondering if it would be possible for you to get into it. Much is to be learned from choir work; part-singing, modulation, and so on. Do they have a good leader, do you know?"

"I'm sure I don't know, but I could find out next Sunday, or maybe Mom or Pop could ask for me. They are all people a good deal older than I am, though," Betty told her.

"Older? That is good, they have more experience," the teacher replied. "You ask, please, and then let me know. You run along now and join your Elyse. She is a very nice young lady; I like her so much!"

Betty wandered out into the schoolyard looking for Elyse. Robby saw her as she came out of the building, so he walked over, and as he drew near, said, "Hello, stranger! Seems ages since I saw you. How come you've been staying in at Mrs. Carroll's?"

"I've been doing some extra theory for my music class, and Mom thought it would be too much of a strain, going back and forth and studying so hard, so she suggested I better stay in town."

"Darn that old music class! You're practically a stranger ever since you joined it. Is it going to continue this way?" he asked.

"Why, it will be even more so," she laughed, and then said, "But I know how you feel, for I miss you and Elyse, too, but I'm coming home tonight, and no more cramming until Monday. How's that?"

"Wonderful, Princess!" he said, and gave her arm a squeeze. "Maybe you'll be able to join us this weekend, at the Burnses' Barn Dance. Harry asked especially that I bring you along. We sure missed you at the Hillsby dance last Saturday night. Everyone had a good time, but I sure was lost without you. The kids ribbed me, because I refused to dance the first, supper, and last dance with anyone else."

"That's silly, Robby!" she exclaimed. "You should have asked someone, as the boys are scarce enough at dances any more."

Many more girls than boys these days. Wish this darn old war was over!"

"I've been wanting to go when school is out, but Mother and Dad very emphatically said, 'no can do,' as they need me, also they think I'm too young to go. Maybe they're right, who knows?"

"I'm sure they are," Betty answered, then added, "Guess Jack is leaving right after May 24. Pop is sure going to miss him; Loretta too. Suppose we girls will have to turn farmerettes, but Pop is going to try and get another man, if he can."

When there was no company, Sunday afternoon always found Mary and Pat in their favorite rockers, with the week's collection of papers and magazines. This Sunday was no exception. There had been silence between them for a long while, but Pat finally looked up and said, "Don't you think we should go to Regina this coming week, and see about the piano? Then too, I want to try and find a man, as Jack won't be with us much longer. Will give me a few days to get the new man into the routine before he leaves."

"Yes, I guess we should go this week. We could leave it there to be shipped down at a later date." She lapsed into silence, then added, "I truly hate to see Jack go. It's like losing one of the family, but such is life, I guess. All we can do is pray he will come back safe and sound."

"I couldn't be more upset over it if he were my own son," Pat admitted. "He's sort of grown up with us, like our own. Where are the children, anyway?" he asked then.

"Well Betty and Margie went to church early. You know Betty wouldn't think of missing it since she is with the choir. They took a lunch, and were joining the Stewart children afterward. Robby is on the baseball team this year, and there was a practice game this afternoon, or something like that, so they were staying for that. Don't know where Jack and Loretta went after dinner, but likely for a stroll in the coulee. Poor kids are pretty upset over Jack's leaving so soon."

Jack and Loretta sat in silence under a clump of shady willows. Jack was stretched out full length on his stomach, then he flopped over on his back and stared at her. Finally she asked, "What are you staring at, dear?"

"You, darling! Making a mental picture to carry with me, till I get home again," he answered.

"Please, Jack, don't make it worse," she pleaded, and tears came into her eyes.

"Oh, sweet, don't cry!" he exclaimed, and sat up quickly, then took her into his arms. "Why can't we be married before I go? I could stand it so much better if you were really truly all mine."

"That's such a useless argument, dear; you know Mom and Pop don't think we should."

"But darling, I want so to have you, to hold you close, and say over and over to myself, This is mine, mine, all mine! Seems then there would be nothing in the world could ever happen to keep me from returning to you."

"Please, Jack!" she pleaded, as she pushed his hands away. "Try to be patient, dear, and please help some, as I can't do all the saying of no all the time. It's hard for me, too, as I want most terribly to be yours, but we would both be sorry, if anything happened to mar our beautiful love for one another."

Jack jumped to his feet, then plunged his hands deep into his trouser pockets. His face was dark and thoughtful, and he muttered to himself, "Wish I was gone already, or at least ready to leave this instant! The sooner the better I'd say!"

"Oh! So that's how you want to act! Okay, then! I guess there isn't any further need for me here. I imagine Mom has something more useful for me to do at the house!" With that she put her words into effect and started for the house.

As quickly as it had come, Jack's mood changed, and he was all remorse. He dashed after her, and pleaded, "Please, darling; oh, please forgive me! I must be crazy! How could anyone be so ugly to one so patient and sweet as you?" He put his arms around her, drew her close and whispered, "Please come back to our willow-castle, and let me hold you close in my arms again."

"Oh Jack! You drive me half crazy with your moods, but if you promise to make no more such scenes, I'll come back."

"I promise anything, just anything, so you won't be angry with me." He turned her around, and with his arm still about her waist led her back to the shady willows. Seated again, they sat in silence, and stared at the stream, then suddenly their eyes were drawn to one another, and as suddenly they were in each others' arms again. Jack's lips against her ear whispered, "I love you! Love you! Tell me you do, too! Say it, darling! Say it over and over! Please, sweetheart!"

"Yes, dear, I do! I do! With all my being, I love you!" she answered him.

"Thank you, my own! for telling me." His lips searched for hers, and all was peace between them again.

The following week, Jack was at his mother's and father's house, having noontime dinner with them. His dad asked, "You leaving for training soon, Son?"

"Yes, Dad, I'm to leave here May 27. Still don't know what camp I'm to be assigned to." Then he turned to his mother and said, "I wish you'd do something for me."

"Certainly, if I can," she replied.

"Do you suppose you could take the train up to Regina, and pick out a nice ring for Loretta? I want to give it to her before I leave."

"Yes, I guess I could, dear, but do you think I would know what to get?" She glanced at her husband, grinned, and said, "Maybe Dad could do better, as he at least has had some experience along that line, when he picked mine. Are you sure you cannot manage it yourself? Of course I would love to do it for you, but it seems such a personal matter."

"I'm asking you, Mother, because I have implicit faith in your good taste," he told her, then put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a bunch of bills, and handed them to her. "Here, you take this, and see what you can find."

"Is there any special stone that you know Loretta likes? Has she ever mentioned any?" his mother then asked.

"No, not that I know of. She is so sweet and unselfish, it's perhaps never entered her head to want an engagement ring, so I'm sure anything nice will appeal to her."

"All right Son, I'll go right away tomorrow, and get it for you. The sooner the better, so you will have a little while to see her enjoy it, and share in the enjoyment, too, before you leave."

"Thanks, Mother, you're a dear," he replied, and planted a sound smack on her cheek; and he breezed out of the house to do the errands he had come to town for.

A couple of evenings later, Mr. and Mrs. Carroll drove out to the Manns. Mrs. Carroll had a little trouble conveying the small white box to Jack, but it was finally accomplished. She was somewhat relieved, but still anxious to know if it was what he really had in mind. He managed to stop by her chair later, leaned over to kiss her cheek, and whispered, "It's exquisite, Mother! I never would have been able to find anything so gorgeous myself." She pressed his hand, but did not tell him that she had had to make two trips to get it. After she had looked and looked at rings, none took her eye but one, but it cost more money than the amount Jack had given her. She had it put aside, and returned home to talk it over with her husband, and they agreed between the two of them to add the balance, and keep it a secret from Jack.

Mary was in the kitchen by herself, preparing coffee and a light lunch. Jack came in and asked, "Mrs. Mann, could I ask a favor?"

"Name it, my dear, you know you can."

"It's a secret so far, but I was wondering . . ." he hesitated, then finally went on, "Well, I had Mother get me an engagement ring for Loretta. I want to give it to her Sunday, and I was wondering, could I have Mother and Dad out for the occasion?"

Mary looked at him with surprise on her face, then grinned and said, "How splendid, Jack! Of course you can, and I'll make an engagement dinner. I'll never grow up I guess where surprises

are concerned; I love them! I'm so glad for you and Loretta." The conversation stopped abruptly, as Loretta entered the kitchen. She glanced at Mom and then Jack. "What deep, dark secret goes on here? You two have a guilty look on your faces."

Mom looked at her with a twinkle in her eyes, then teased, "You're not jealous, are you, chicken?" Then she added, "It was nothing, dear, except Jack and I were talking over his leaving for camp soon."

Loretta accepted her explanation, as she had been teasing, too, and Mom knew better; who ever heard of anyone being jealous of her mother?

Later, when the Carrolls were preparing to go home, Mary managed a word on the side to Mrs. Carroll: "Jack told me about the ring for Loretta, so I'm planning an engagement dinner Sunday. You and Mr. Carroll will join us, won't you?" Mrs. Carroll assured her they would love to come.

During the week Mary heard Betty making some arrangements about going out Sunday, so she had to take her into her confidence about the engagement dinner, and suggested Betty invite Elyse, Robby, and Don to join them for dinner. That way Loretta would be satisfied that the extra preparations were being made for them.

Sunday morning, after Mary finished with letting off and feeding the setting hens, then seeing that they were all safely settled on their eggs again, she walked over to the machine shop, where Pat was tinkering with some implement. When she got within speaking distance, he asked, "Will you hand me those pliers, dear? They've slipped beyond my reach, and I was wondering how I was going to get hold of them again without letting go this part."

She handed him the pliers, then asked, "Pat, is there any of that dandelion wine left?"

"I think perhaps there is a gallon jug stowed somewhere in the cellar . . . why?"

"Jack is giving Loretta her ring before we eat dinner, and I thought he would perhaps be nervous; so maybe it would be nice if you said a few words, then offered a toast and congratulations.

I guess one could drink a toast of water, but it don't seem proper somehow; then I remembered about the wine, and it's mild enough, a small glass won't hurt the children."

"I'll be through with this thing in a little while, then I'll come and see if I can locate the wine. Meantime I better be making up my speech, eh? What'll I say, anyway?"

"Oh, you'll think of something, I'm sure. You usually aren't lacking in flattery, and that's what it really amounts to."

"Okay, I'll give it my undivided attention," he assured her.

Betty and Mary finally managed to get Loretta out of the kitchen and off upstairs to make the beds, a chore which usually fell to Betty. As soon as she was out of hearing, Mary said, "Betty, there will be twelve of us, won't there?"

Betty made a quick calculation, then answered, "Yes, that's right, Mom."

"Well while Loretta is out of sight, you get those twelve small glasses from the bottom of the sideboard. Be sure and wipe them off, for they might be dusty! You know the ones I mean, don't you? The ones Grandma Mann gave us."

"What's the glasses for?" Betty asked.

"For wine to make a toast, when Jack gives Loretta her ring," Mary replied.

"Gee! Like in real society, eh Mom?"

"No, dear, not really; it's more a gesture of good will and love when you offer a toast to someone, and especially when it's to someone you think as much of as we do of Jack and Loretta."

"Yes, I guess that's right, when you put it that way," Betty said.

"You hurry up now, and get the glasses ready. Put them on the tray ready for use. Where in the heck are we going to hide them until dinner time? Oh, I know; put them in the pantry on the top of the flour barrel. You know where I mean, under the table part. I don't think she'll find them there."

"Okay, Mom," Betty answered, as she knelt in front of the sideboard, and carefully took out the precious glasses. While she was wiping them, she asked, "Shouldn't I put a doily or something on this tray?"

"Yes, dear, that will be nice."

Quite some time earlier, Pat had come in and gone into the cellar to look for the wine. Now he was making a terrible clatter, so Mary went to the cellar door and called, "In Heaven's name, Pat, are you taking the place apart down there? Do be careful of my fruit and things."

"Ask Betty if she knows what they did with it, when they stored all this stuff down here last fall," he yelled back from the cellar.

She turned to Betty and asked, "Do you recall seeing a jug of dandelion wine, when you girls put things away?"

"Sure, I know where it is," she answered.

"Well, go down and show Pop, before he tears the foundation from under the house." Then she called back to Pat, "Betty knows; she'll be right down. You go on, Betty, and I'll put the glasses away."

She tripped lightly down the cellar stairs, and as she came into view Pat said, "You must have made darn sure to hide it plenty well." She didn't answer him; just walked over to the wall, turned a box over, and there, as nice as you please, was the full gallon. When they reached the top of the stairs, Pat demanded, "What's the idea asking me to find this, when Betty knew where it was all the time?"

"Are you by any chance hollering at me, Pat?" Mary retorted. "Because if you are, you can stop this instant! How was I supposed to know you hadn't put it away yourself?"

"Please, Mom! And you too, Pop! Loretta's going to hear you," Betty pleaded. "You're going to spoil everything with your hollering."

For an instant Pat looked as if he would burst a blood-vessel, then a sheepish grin spread over his face, and he said, "Sorry, chicken! Sorry, Mary!"

"Me too, Pat," Mary agreed, "and excuse me, Betty, will you? I almost lost my temper for a minute, and I'm sorry!"

"Okay, Mary," Pat answered first.

"Let's skip it, eh?" Betty asked.

So the near-quarrel was forgotten before it got a good start. Jack came in soon after, and stood looking at the preparations, then said, "However am I going to manage without you all? Seems more like this is my real home, and Mother's and Dad's is my other home."

"Say, this won't do, Son! This is your big day! Come on, snap out of it!" Pat exclaimed.

"You're right, Pat; everything smells wonderful, Mom Mary."

"Thanks, Jack, but hadn't you better be getting shaved and dressed? By the way we've planned a little toast—at least I hope Pat's ready—and thought you could give Loretta her ring before dinner. Is that all right by you?"

"Any way you want it will be fine with me. I'll be glad when it's all over, though, as I'm nervous as a cat on a tin roof. Oh, excuse me! That sorta slipped out, and it wasn't very nice, was it?"

"You're excused, Jack," Mom answered, and then giggled, "It does sort of suit the occasion at that." Then she saw Betty's shoulders shaking, even though her back was turned, and she knew she was enjoying the joke, too. Just then Betty heard Loretta's footsteps, as she started down the stairs, and she hissed, "Hey! Break it up, here she comes!"

As she came into the kitchen, there was a great silence, and she looked at Mary's back bent over the oven. Pat frantically stropped his razor; Jack splashed water a mile high, as he vigorously scrubbed his neck and ears. Betty's eyes spied the gallon of wine, just in time, and she streaked for the pantry to hide it.

After she looked around, Loretta said, "There seemed to be a tremendous joke going on here a moment ago, so I hurried down to enjoy it too, and now it's silent as a tomb in here. What's going on, anyway?"

"Nothing in particular, dear," Mary found her voice first: "Pop was spinning one of his yarns, weren't you, dear?" and she looked toward him, then added, "You better tell it to Loretta also," then she turned her back again.

Pat gulped a couple of times, gave a halfhearted laugh, then said, "Yes, it was about a funny guy I saw in Regina the other day—"

"Maybe you shouldn't take time to tell it now, Pat," Mary hurried to put in, "as the company will be arriving any time. Anyway, it wasn't very funny, Loretta, and he can tell you some other time. You and Betty really should be getting dressed. Betty, you round up Margie and Janet, and help get them washed and dressed. You go on and get ready yourself, Loretta, then you can get back down and set the table. There will be twelve of us altogether."

"Okay, Mom," Loretta replied, and took a gallon pail, filled it with hot water from the reservoir, and went back upstairs.

"Golly! Was that a close call!" Mary whispered.

"And howl!" Betty agreed. "I'll go get the girls now."

"And what was the big idea pushing the whole thing onto my shoulders?" Pat hissed at Mary. "You sure put me on the spot."

"I might have put you on it, but I took you right off it again, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did. Guess it was the only way it could be done, but it took some pretty quick thinking on your part, Mary."

It wasn't long afterward that Mr. and Mrs. Carroll arrived, followed in a short time by Elyse, Robby, and Don. Everything was ready to be served, so Mary gave the signal for Betty to put the glasses of wine on the table. Then she told each one where she wished him to sit. As she placed Jack and Loretta together at her end of the table, Loretta glanced at her in surprise, but luckily didn't ask any questions. When each one was seated Pat lowered his head and asked a simple blessing; then rose to his feet, looked at Loretta, and said, "My dear, though you do not know it, this is your own special day. Jack, I believe you have something you wish to give to her."

Jack reached into his pocket and brought forth the small, white box, which he handed to her. She opened it; a diamond solitaire in a Tiffany setting winked up at her. She flushed, then

turned ghastly pale; she looked quickly around the table, then at Jack, and her eyes filled with tears.

Tears in a woman's eyes always seemed to floor Pat, so he spoke up quickly, and said, "Well, well, come on, my boy! Put it on her finger and seal it with a kiss!"

Jack took her hand and placed the lovely ring on her finger, then kissed her tenderly on the lips.

Pat raised his glass and announced, "To you, our dear girl, we wish every kind of happiness, and I must admit you picked yourself a future husband who is one in a million; and to you, Jack, always be good to her, as she is our extra-special dear; also we wish for you a safe and speedy return; for you both long life, filled brimming over with love, happiness, and many laughs. The laughs tide you over the rough spots."

Mr. Carroll arose then with glass in hand, and offered, "To our future daughter, whom Mother and I already love very dearly, and to you, our son, who shows such good taste, Mother and I wish you long life and every happiness."

Everyone stood and drank to the two toasts, then Pat demanded, "Speech! Speech!"

Jack rose, lifted his glass, and said, "Well this part you forgot to warn me of. I'm afraid I'm not much of a speaker, but I'll try to say what is my in heart. First, to my beautiful bride-to-be: I love you very dearly, and promise from this day forward to consider your welfare first; to you, my dear Mother, for your helpful guidance, which you have given me all these years; to Dad, for your wonderful understanding and help with problems; to you, Mom Mary, for being a second mother to me; to you, Pat, I hardly know what to say, for you're my pal, my buddy, my sidekick, but whatever you are, I couldn't have managed without you; to you, Betty, Margie, and Janet, who are sometimes the flies in my ointment, I thank you, for that's the way real sisters are supposed to be, and you three are really, truly like sisters to me; to you Elyse, Robby, and Don, for being real friends! Phew! Was that a speech? But now I'm practically panting for breath, as I don't believe I ever said that

many words at once in my life before. What's that slangy expression? Oh yes, I know! Down the hatch everybody!" And he lifted his glass to them all.

There was complete silence as each one resumed his chair. As Pat looked around the table, he noticed tears in most of the eyes, so he exclaimed, "Hey! You womenfolk! Turn off the weeps, and bring on the food! This is supposed to be a day for joy, not for crying!"

Life consisted of nothing but study; at least so it seemed to Betty the past few weeks. As she came to kiss Mom good-bye, she said, "Well, I won't see you all for almost a week."

"Take good care of yourself, honey, and above all eat your meals, so you won't have a headache nagging at you while you are trying to write your examinations. I'll keep my fingers crossed for you, and we will all be in Friday afternoon for the closing-day exercises and the program."

"Thanks, Mom," Betty answered. "I'll perhaps need your good thoughts, especially on that old music theory. Tell Pop good-bye for me, as I forgot to say anything to him before he left for the field."

"Yes, I will, dear. Be sure and try not to be too much bother to Mrs. Carroll this week," she cautioned, as she followed Betty out to see her off.

"Hey!" Loretta called from the back kitchen door. "Aren't you going to let me wish you good luck?" She came toward the gate, where Betty had her pony tethered.

"Oh, I thought you were in the milkhouse. I was going to stop there on my way out."

"No, I came in a while ago," she told her, then said, "we won't see you until the end of the week, I guess?"

Betty nodded her head, and said, "That's right."

"Well, good luck, Sis, and don't let them get you down with those old examinations." She kissed her good-bye and gave her a hug. Betty swung herself up onto the pony's back, waved to them both, and was on her way. They closed the gate behind

her, and walked back to the house in silence, each busy with her own thoughts.

Friday morning the sun came up in a blaze; a real summer day, and it should be, as this was June 23, the longest day of the year. Mary reminded Pat that this was the day they were to attend the high-school exercises. He assured her he hadn't forgotten, then asked, "Guess we better get the piano installed in the house, hadn't we?" For almost a week now, it had been covered up in one of the granaries.

"Yes, it should be brought in, but do you think you and the man can manage between you? It's going to be a terrible load."

"We'll manage," he assured her. Then she began to worry about how they were going to get it moved in, and kept a secret until tonight, especially from Loretta. But Loretta solved that problem herself, when she came in to say that she was riding over to Mrs. Stewart's on an errand, and shouldn't be gone more than an hour. Once it was installed in the house, Mary locked the parlor door, and decided they could just worry about why it was locked, until it was time for the surprise.

As they came into the auditorium that afternoon, they found a large crowd already assembled. The stage was nicely decorated, and several chairs and instruments were standing upon it. Soon the members of the school orchestra and band filed in and took their seats; then Mr. Hillary, the principal, came onto the stage, bid all of them welcome on behalf of the pupils, gave the signal to the musicians, and they broke forth with *God Save the King*. Everyone stood and sang. Then the concert started, and pupil after pupil came forward to offer his or her bit. Mary glanced at her program and saw Betty's name about halfway down the page, in a solo spot. She showed it to Pat and whispered, "She never breathed a word she was going to sing alone. It says she's to sing, 'The Lark's Rejoicing.'" Pat nodded his head, then turned to look at his own program.

Twice they had caught glimpses of her in the chorus, and now it was time for her solo. Mary felt as nervous as if it were

she up there; she kept saying over to herself, "Please let her be good."

Betty came out on the stage, and stood near the piano; the accompanist played the opening bars, then she started her song. She was a little nervous at first, but soon she forgot the audience, and the words rang out clear and true. The audience applauded and applauded when she finished, and they would not be content until she sang again. This time she sang "*"Tis the Last Rose of Summer,*" and as she came back upon the stage to make her second bow, Mr. Hillary, Miss Bordeaux, Signor Marchetti, and Mr. Darby followed her out. She started to leave again, but Miss Bordeaux took her hand and brought her back to the center of the stage.

Mr. Hillary smiled at her, and said, "We have kept this as a complete surprise for you, Betty; you are the winner of this year's scholarship!"

Mr. Darby came forward then, and Mr. Hillary said, "Mr. Darby, I want you to meet Miss Elizabeth Mann," then he turned to Betty and added, "Mr. Darby is the man who so graciously offered the money for the scholarship, and I see he has a check in his hand for you!"

Mr. Darby extended his hand, and offered her the check, then commented, "I heard you sing this afternoon for the first time, and I am sure you are going a long way with so lovely a voice. Use this money to better it all you possibly can, and some day when you are a famous singer just remember once in a while Frank Darby, who helped you get started. That is all the strings connected with it, my dear. Now I want you to meet a fine fellow! Your music-master for the next year at least; he offers as his share of this scholarship one year's lessons free. Here he is, Signor Anthony Marchetti!"

As Signor Marchetti stepped forward, the audience broke into an applause. He bowed to them, then took Betty's hand in his, smiled at her, and remarked, "Today I smile at you, and squeeze your hand; next week I holler like mad, when you don't hit right note. But we shall be good friends, always. I am most happy you are to be my new pupil, and we shall have a fine time, mak-

ing you a great singer!" Then he kissed her soundly on each cheek.

Mr. Hillary stepped forward again, and said, "Thank you, Frank; and you also, Tony; and audience, those of you who haven't met her before, this is Miss Bordeaux, who is the music teacher." She smiled at Mr. Hillary, bowed to the audience, then stepped back beside Betty. Then Mr. Hillary asked, "Are Mr. and Mrs. Mann in the auditorium? Will you both please come forward?"

Mary and Pat rose, then ascended the steps to the platform. After Mr. Hillary shook hands with them, he introduced them to the others upon the stage. They acknowledged the introductions and both kissed Betty. Pat stood with an arm around her; he could feel her shaking from head to foot. Mr. Hillary turned to the folks assembled in the seats and said, "Perhaps you haven't all met Mr. and Mrs. Mann, and their daughter Betty. They are new neighbors in the neighborhood, since last fall, but any of you who haven't will do well to make their acquaintance, as they are most charming people. I believe there are a couple more daughters. Isn't that right?" he asked Pat.

"Three to be exact," Pat told him.

"Would the other daughters please come forward?" Mr. Hillary asked. Margie and Loretta, with Janet between them, ascended the steps to the stage. Pat made the introductions, and omitted to mention Loretta's last name, and she was really thrilled, as that made her a real daughter in everyone's eyes.

It took ages before they were able to leave the auditorium, as everyone stopped to congratulate Betty, then shook hands with the whole family, but finally they were all gone except Mr. and Mrs. Carroll, Mr. and Mrs. Stewart, and Robby, Elyse, and Don. Betty spoke up then, and said, "I have to go backstage to get my things. I'll be right back." She didn't return for ages, it seemed, and Robby was getting nervous about her being gone so long. Finally he decided to go see what was keeping her. As he came into the room behind the stage, he found her huddled in a chair, crying her eyes out.

"Why, Princess, what goes here?" he asked as he put an arm

about her bent shoulders. "Whatever is the matter now, honey?"

"Oh, Robby! It's all so wonderful! I just can't believe it; I simply had to cry, I couldn't help it!"

"Womenfolk are sure funny," he replied. "I thought people laughed when they were happy, but you can never tell what a woman will do. Come on now, dry your pretty eyes, and let's get out of here."

When they joined the others, they found arrangements had been made to go to the Carrolls' for supper. Mary and Mrs. Stewart tried to tell them that there were too many of them, but Kitty insisted, then said, "I haven't seen any of you folks, except Betty, since Jack went to camp, and it's been lonesome." When she put it that way, it was decided that they would go. They sauntered down the shady street toward the house, but—when they opened the door another surprise awaited them, for there stood Jack, dressed in his new uniform. He grinned at them, then said, "Got in just in time to hear your solos, Betty, and all the nice things that happened to you; then I beat it over here. Gosh, I'm glad for you, kid!" He grabbed her and gave her a big kiss, then turned to kiss his mother, Mary, and Loretta. He stood with an arm over Loretta's shoulders and beamed at them all. They congratulated him on his fine appearance; then he suggested, "Let's all go out to the farm, for if I remember correctly there's another surprise out there."

"Hush, Jack!" Mary admonished, then added, "No, I don't mean that; I'm glad you made the suggestion, otherwise it would be rather late to take in another surprise tonight." She turned to Kitty and said, "If that is all right with you, and won't put you out."

"It's fine with me, Mary," she answered. "I'll just take my cake along, and we'll eat it there instead."

Mary turned to the men then, and said, "Well you better get the teams, so we can get started."

"I'll take you womenfolk out in the auto," Stan offered. "That will give you time to get the food started."

The girls had kept quiet as long as possible; now all four

burst forth at once, "Mom, what's the surprise?" She shook her head no. "But please, Mom, we can't wait all that time to get out home!"

"But you'll just have to, my dears," she answered. "Now please stop teasing and asking, for it won't do one speck of good." They knew she meant it, too, but they could hardly contain themselves, they were so full of curiosity. Betty started in on Loretta and Margie, for they at least had been there, and surely they had seen something, but they assured her they didn't know a thing, other than the parlor had been locked all day.

It made quite a procession when they started out; Mr. Carroll and the three women, plus Janet, in the auto, and they were soon out of sight in a cloud of dust; then came Pat and Mr. Stewart, plus Johnny, Billy, and Margie; after them Jack and Loretta with Pat's team and rig; followed by Robby, Elyse, Don, and Betty on their ponies.

As Mr. Carroll steered the auto into the yard, Mary remarked, "Good! Jim is already at the milking." Jim was a fairly elderly man, whom Pat had hired when Jack left for the service. He wasn't much help in the fields, but Pat said he was exceptionally good with the animals, and did a good job on the chores.

When they got in the house, Stan suggested that he don a pair of Pat's overalls and go give Jim a hand. Mary thanked him, and said that would be fine, if he was sure he really didn't mind. He assured her it would be a treat, as he longed to be around the animals once in a while.

Mary quickly got a fire going in the cookstove, put the kettle on, then said she was going upstairs to change into something comfortable. As she came back downstairs, she found the two women were busy getting the table set for supper. She said, "I have to run out and look after my poultry; do you two want to come along?"

"Guess we will, Mary, as there will be plenty of time to get things done here, before the rest cover those eight miles home," Anita answered. So the three women left the house, chattering about this and that of the day's happenings.

At the house again, they were quickly putting the final touches to the meal when they heard the noisy arrival of the others. The girls burst into the house, and demanded to be told the surprise immediately, but Mary answered their outburst quietly with, "You'll have to be patient until the men get here, too."

"Oh Mom, please, do we have to wait for them?" from Margie.

Then Betty put in, "Please Mom, I can't wait another minute!"

"Hush now, the two of you! You could save some time, you know, by removing your coats and freshening yourselves up for supper; and be sure to fix your hair, you are all pretty wind-blown-looking." So they finally gave up, and all went upstairs to do Mary's bidding.

"Whatever do you suppose it is?" Elyse asked.

"Gosh! I don't know, but I'm about to burst with curiosity," Betty replied.

They got their toilets over quickly, and dashed back down the stairs. The men were just coming in, but they had to wait for them to get out of their coats and wash up. Mom suggested, "Loretta, either you or Betty help Janet, as she is getting herself all wet there at the basin, trying to wash herself."

Loretta walked over and said, "Here let me give you a hand, Baby!"

"No! I wanna wash myself," she screamed.

"Come on now, let Big Sis help, you're getting your pretty dress all wet," Loretta coaxed.

"All right Retta, but tomorrow, can I wash myself?"

"Yes, tomorrow honey, when you have your play dress on."

Mary was always amused at Loretta and Janet. Loretta was so patient with her, and always won her point, but Betty usually ended up boxing her ears; then the battle was on.

"Mother, please! How much longer?" Betty queried. "Everyone is here now."

"Okay, dear, if everyone is ready, we'll go into the parlor." She led the way, inserted the key in the lock, then threw the door wide. They all crowded in, and many exclamations were heard from all. There it stood against the wall, a beautiful

Heintzman, shining and shimmering in the late afternoon sunlight.

Betty put out a hand and touched its satin wood, then dropped the hand to the keyboard. She didn't say a word, but Margie exclaimed, "It's sure a beauty, but nobody plays in this house! Are we going to have lessons?"

"You're all going to have lessons this summer," Mary put in; "you too, Loretta," as she noticed her looking at the piano longingly.

"Me too? Oh, golly! Thanks, Mom, and you too, Pop!" She threw her arms around each one and kissed them. Margie followed in her footsteps, expressing her thanks with great enthusiasm, but Betty still said nothing. She dropped herself to the piano bench, and sat there very quietly.

Pat couldn't stand it any longer, so he asked, "Well, chicken, how do you like it? Isn't it a beauty?" Then he noticed tears streaming down her cheeks. He motioned the others to leave, but reached out his hand to Mary, and kept her beside him.

"Cry it out, Baby!" He sat down on the bench beside her, and put an arm around her, then as he pulled her to him said, "Here, put your head on my shoulder. It's a wonderful place to shed tears."

Soon after, she calmed down, looked up at them, and said, "This has been such a wonderful day, but I don't think I can stand much more." She tried to smile through her tears. "You two are the most wonderful parents a kid could ever have."

"Why, thank you, dear," Mary answered. "We are so glad that you really like it."

"Like it! Why, I love it! Just think: to be able to sit here, and play real music," she mused, and ran her fingers over the keys.

"Well, darlin', do you suppose we can join the company now?" Pat asked. "We can't stay here all evening."

"Yes, Pop; but first let me thank you both. I hope you two didn't sacrifice too much to buy it, as I happen to know they cost a small fortune."

"Mom and I will worry about that part," Pop assured her,

"and what's more it's all paid for now, and is really, truly ours!"

Betty stood up then, kissed each one of them, and said, "I'm ready to go in with the others now."

When supper was finished, and the dishes out of the way, Pat inquired, "Elyse, dear, do you think you could play something for us on the new piano?"

"I don't play much without music, but I know a couple of pieces by heart. I'll be glad to try, as I've been dying to hear how that new beauty sounds."

"What are we waiting for then?" And he led the way into the parlor.

Elyse sat down and played her pieces, and everyone enjoyed them thoroughly. She played very nicely, although she would never set the world on fire with her music. Then Mary suggested, "Elyse, you'll have to play Betty's accompaniment, until she is able to manage herself, as she will be starting her vocal lessons right away."

"I'll be glad to, as long as they don't become too complicated," she agreed.

Later on, Signor Tony asked Elyse to come in, and he showed her how he wanted her to accompany Betty. They managed very nicely that way, and it helped Elyse too, as Betty's enthusiasm over her lessons kept Elyse on her toes all the time. From the very first singing lesson, Betty found that the music filled a void which she had not been able to understand before.

The summer on a whole was wonderful! So many things to do which the girls had never done before. In July the wild fruit was ready to pick. Wild raspberries in the bluffs, and such an abundance of them this year. The girls picked them by the bucketfuls, and Mary put them down in a rich syrup. They made up a picnic one day, and a whole bunch went Saskatoon picking, down near Fort Qu'Appelle. The bushes were loaded with great clusters of the blue-purple berries, which were very good canned, to be eaten like fruit, but were out of this world in pies! Juicy and yummy! In the coulee the girls found chokecherries, which

Mom made into jelly; wild gooseberries; and some wild strawberries. The strawberries had a flavor which was unequaled, but one had to pick for a century to get enough to do anything with, as each berry was about the size of a medium-sized pea. Of course all good things had to have some drawbacks, and in this case it was the mosquitoes: great black swarms of them, and hungry as all get-out. When Mom got the girls rigged up to pick fruit, they looked as if they were ready for a masquerade. The legs of long, black cotton stockings pulled over their arms, and pinned to their shoulders; a pair of Pop's or Jack's old overalls; then a cloth over their heads which hung down around their shoulders, and perched on top, an old straw hat, to keep off the sun. The first time they were fixed up in these outfits they became hysterical with laughter when they looked at one another.

Jack was shipped overseas in midsummer, and Loretta was sunk in gloom for ages. Most of her spare time was spent writing long letters to him. She who scoffed at knitting now clicked her needles with the best knitters in the neighborhood. She worked like a beaver, too, on first one committee and then another, helping to raise funds to send overseas. With her on so many committees, Betty's time was taken up too, as Loretta was always putting her name on the list of entertainers. Signor Tony was delighted, as he said it would give her poise for concerts later on, but Betty wasn't always so happy over the arrangements, as often it interfered with her being able to attend a baseball game with Robby.

Robby's dad bought a new auto, shortly after school was out, so Betty went to the ball games in the highest style. The Hillsby team, on which Robby played, belonged to the League; in the League were teams from all the small towns close by. As the season advanced, and Hillsby held the lead over these towns, it became almost a matter of life or death to Betty if she had to miss one. The main games were usually held on the town's Sport Day, and in the evening there was always a dance. Betty nearly fifteen, knew of nothing more exciting than dancing.

The first week of August—hot and dry!—was ideal weather for ripening the wheat. It stood straight and tall in the fields, and

had turned a beautiful gold, which shimmered in the sun as it nodded this way and that when the breezes caught at it. Surely nothing could happen to it now; but today, as all the family were assembled for one of Mom's good dinners, they heard an auto drive into the yard, and someone yelled at the top of his lungs. Everyone rushed out to see what in the world was the matter. They saw Robby in the auto, and he pointed east and panted, "Your wheat, Mr. Mann! There's a fire out there!" Pat looked and saw the smoke curling up, and he started to the barn on the run.

"Here, get into the auto! We can make it faster!" Robby called after him.

"No, Robby, got to get teams and start plowing furrows, to try and save the buildings here, and maybe some of the other fields! Come on, Jim!"

"Dear God!" Mary whispered, as she stood with both hands pressed to her throat, and looked at the great billows of smoke rising in the east field. Finally she turned to Robby and asked, "What do we do to help?"

"Start filling barrels with water, and get some gunny sacks ready; I'm going for Dad and the boys!" He wheeled the auto around, and was gone.

Mom and the girls worked frantically, first rolling the barrels to the well; but as they started to fill them Mom got her reasoning together, and said, "Betty! You and Loretta get a team, and the stoneboat, and bring it here! Margie, get more pails from the milkhouse! Please, Janet dear, step back out of Mom's way, and don't cry honey, everything will be all right!"

As soon as the girls arrived back with the team and boat, they got the barrels upon it, and then filled them. Then the whole Stewart family arrived to give a hand, and Robby followed close behind them, with another team and plow. The yard was filling with people, as if dropped from nowhere.

"Oh, thank God!" Mary said, as she saw Mr. Burns and Harry on their tractor; they plowed straight through the three-strand barbed-wire fence, and immediately sank the plough's sharp shares, and the black earth folded into sight.

The fire had apparently started near the highway, and was

roaring through Pat's beautiful summerfallow wheat. A whole mint of money turned into a red, blazing inferno in an instant. Already the fire was creeping up on the big strawstack behind the hog barn. Mr. Stewart yelled, "We better get those hogs out of there! Betty! Elyse! Give me a hand! Boys! get the rest of the stock out of the barns, and head them toward the coulee! You womenfolk keep your eyes on those sparks, and beat out every single one with those wet gunnysacks."

The heat was becoming almost unbearable, and the roar terrible, as it raced closer and closer. Margie and Jan were crying, and sobs were rising in Mary's throat, as she prayed, "Oh please God, please! Please, don't let anyone get hurt! Let the wheat go; anything, just anything, so they remain safe!"

It seemed it had no sooner started than it was over. Everyone was back in the yard again, and a sorry-looking bunch they were. Smoke-blackened faces; hair singed; eyebrows and lashes completely gone. Betty cried when she helped Pop and Jim unhitch the horses; they were completely covered with a white lather, manes and tails burned away, and great patches of hair burned off their hides. The poor dumb beasts had been terribly frightened, but had obeyed Pop, Jim, and Robby's orders, even when the fire was licking at their bodies.

The whole east field was gone, a black, barren waste, but they had managed to save the stubble-wheat and the green feed-crops; the strawstack behind the hogpens lay a black, smoldering mass, but there the fire stopped, so all the buildings had been saved.

Mary rushed into Pat's arms as he came from the barn. "Oh, thank goodness you're safe! I couldn't have stood much more, I don't think." He held her close, then his head dropped to her shoulder, and great sobs racked his body. Mrs. Stewart quickly took the situation in hand, and she started moving toward the house, beckoned to the others to follow. As the group moved away, they heard Mary's quiet voice talking to Pat, soothing him, assuring him.

Everyone talked at once, saying that it could have been so much worse. Mrs. Stewart walked over to the stove immediately she entered, shook up the fire, then said, "Girls! Clear the dishes

from the table, and put out fresh cups. I'll make coffee, and it will make us all feel better." The men were a funny-looking bunch, when they got their smoke-blackened faces washed; all were minus eyebrows and lashes. Robby's blonde hair, was singed in several places, as he nearly always went without a hat or cap. Mary and Pat entered soon afterward, and were in complete control of themselves again.

The fire took some getting over, though, and every possible corner had to be cut. The piano lessons had to stop, but Elyse came one day each week and helped as much as she could, so lessons already taken were kept fresh in their minds. The steady talk of a new automobile this fall had to be forsaken. Betty was lucky that she had her scholarship, so her singing lessons could continue.

Mom's voice called up the stairwell, "Betty, dear! What are you doing?"

"Nothing much, Mom! Cleaning out some dresser drawers, to be exact," she called back.

"Would you come and make up some cupcakes for supper, before the fire goes out?"

"Yes, I'll be right down." The bed was stacked full of all the whatnots which fill a young girl's dresser-drawers, but she left them where they were and clattered down the stairs.

"Loretta and I are going out to the granary, and finish our dirty mess out there," Mom said when she came into view. They both had their heads wrapped in towels, as they were making and refilling new feather-pillows.

As she opened the door into the hot, bright, summer kitchen, Betty felt the heat from the afternoon sun pouring in the doorway; and Mom had built up the fire in the stove, as well. She started getting things together for her cake batter, when she heard an old hen fussing; she lifted her gaze to the bluff beyond the house, and saw a big coyote sneaking upon the old hen, and her brood of baby turkeys. She knew if she moved to go to the porch for a rifle, he would hear her. Her eyes fell on Pop's six-

teen-gauge shotgun, which stood in the corner of the kitchen. She opened a drawer of the cabinet, where he kept shells, took out two and slipped them in the chambers of the gun; then she stepped quietly through the screen door, threw the gun to her shoulder, and pulled first one trigger, then the other. About the time the first shell left the gun, Betty was in midair, and by the time the second was on its way, she landed on her seat, without the slightest pretense of dignity. She lay on the ground moaning and groaning as if she were dying.

Mom and Loretta heard the echo of the shots in the granary; they rushed toward the house, and when they found her lying on the ground, the gun beside her, they were frantic. Quickly they searched her over for signs of blood, but found none.

"Bring a towel and cold water, Loretta," Mom said. She seated herself on the ground, and took Betty's head on her lap. When Betty's head was touched, she moaned louder than ever. "Where does it hurt, Baby?" Mom inquired.

She heard Mom's voice as if from a great distance, and she asked, "What hit me? I feel like a mule hauled off and kicked me in the head."

"We don't know what happened," Mom answered. "What are you doing lying out here with Pop's old shotgun?"

She sat up then, and tenderly touched the side of her head, felt her shoulder and arm, before she answered. "There was a coyote after your baby turkeys, and I knew if I tried to get the rifle, he would hear me, so I used Pop's gun, but something went wrong, I guess, for it smacked me in the side of the head and knocked me over."

"In Heaven's name, Betty! Are you always going to be doing such unpredictable things? Seems you can get yourself into more messes than ten people. I hope this teaches you a lesson!" Mom got up like an angry setting hen, with her feathers all ruffled. "Come on, Loretta!" she said. Once she knew Betty was not hurt badly, she was just plain mad, and she flounced back to the granary.

Loretta reached out a hand to Betty, and said, "Come on, get up, Sis. Does your head hurt awful bad? Don't mind Mom,"

as she saw Betty was looking after Mom's straight back. "She was so scared, honey, and it's just reaction, knowing you're all right."

Betty got to her feet, with Loretta's help, and they went back into the kitchen. She dropped into a chair and said, "Ye gods! What a headache!"

"Here, put this cold cloth on it for a while, and you'll soon be fine again," Loretta offered. "There! How's that?"

"I feel better already, Retta; thanks, dear, you can run along and help Mom now, as I'll be okay," Betty told her. "I'll just sit here awhile, then finish the cakes."

When Pat was told at supper, he looked at Betty inquiringly, then asked, "Is the noggin all right now?" She told him that it was sore, but would be all right. Then he inquired, "How about a lesson on how to hold that old cannon after supper?"

"Please, not tonight, Pop," she pleaded. "I don't think my head could stand the jolt, and anyway I'm nervous about it now."

"Well, always remember, when you shoot a shotgun, to hang on to it, for they all have a certain amount of kickback, but most of them aren't so bad as that old relic of mine."

"I'll remember, Pop, but I'm thinking it will be a couple of days before I try again," she replied.

"Never let it be said a Mann backed down from anything," he charged.

"Let her alone, Pat," Mary spoke rather sharply. "Personally, if they leave guns alone completely it would suit me better."

"Um-mm, yes, I see what you mean, dear," and he looked at Betty with a twinkle in his eye.

"Don't go passing undercover looks, you two!" Mary snapped. "You'd think I was a goof or something, not to understand when you two start twinkling at one another."

"Please, Mary, no offense darlin', but you don't always understand about guns, because you never would learn to shoot one," Pat offered peaceably.

"I'm doing very nicely as I am, thank you!" she snapped back. Loretta sensed a storm gathering, so she quickly changed the subject, and Moin's eyes said thanks across the table.

Betty would not try right away to learn to shoot the shotgun, as Pat had suggested, but later Robby, with his patience, coaxed her into it when she went out hunting with him for prairie chickens.

On the way back from one of these hunting trips, Betty told Robby, "Gosh! It's sure going to seem funny going back to school without you. Elyse and I are going to be like a couple of lost sheep with you and Don both gone from school." The two boys had been graduated from high school in June.

"It's going to seem funny to me, too, not to be taking that daily horseback ride," he answered her.

"Have you decided what you are going to do, stay home or go on to the University?"

"Yes, I've decided, Betty; there's a special short course, about two years I believe, on animal husbandry, and I've decided on that. Dad thinks I'm nuts, as this is a grain country, but as I see it, there will be a big field in purebred stock in the very near future. People aren't always going to take their chances on a bad year for a crop, without anything to fall back on."

"I don't believe I follow you, Robby. In what way would you be interested in this—what did you call it?—animal husbandry?"

"Well, when I've finished school, I would like to start raising purebred stock for sale, and raise them to such a high standard that they could be shown in shows. That way I could pull myself a few blue ribbons; then there would be a sale demand for them."

"But won't it take a great deal of money to buy that kind of animals to start?" she asked.

"They will cost plenty, and I'll have to start on a very small scale at first; but Dad's been giving us some stock, grain, and so on for years, so that way we each made some money for our own use each year. I've been saving every penny I could, to buy the first bull, and a couple of heifers. He's agreed that to start, anyway, I can pasture and feed them at home, in exchange for helping him. It will take time, but I hope some day to really make a success of it."

"Well, here's hoping you really do, Robby. I can see you have your heart set on it," she offered, then asked, "When do you leave for school?"

"The second week in September. Gosh! I'm sure going to miss you, Princess."

"I'm going to have to find me a new beau, to escort me to dances and parties," she teased.

"And don't think I'm not going to hate that part of it more than anything, but I can't expect you to stay home all winter, I guess."

September, with its blaze of colors! The trees in the bluffs and coulee were all bright reds, yellows, and golden browns. There was a tang of fall in the air, especially mornings and evenings. The children were back in school, and the house seemed quiet to Mary and Loretta, but there was so much to do that there was no time to enjoy the quiet. Hungry threshers to feed three times a day . . . work! . . . work! . . . from daylight to dark, and then it still wasn't all done. It did not take the threshers long at Pat's this year, as there was only the stubble-wheat and some oats and barley left after the fire. It was going to be some trick to stretch the money from the wheat to make the necessary payments on the place. Mary could tell that Pat was terribly worried and, on top of it all, he would have to buy seed wheat for next spring. They should have kept what wheat they had, and let the piano go until next year. She had made some such suggestions to Pat, but he silenced her and said, "It will work itself out somehow, dear. Don't worry about it." She would have liked to start the children's music lessons again. Maybe what she made from the sale of her turkeys and ducks—and there would be quite a bunch of young roosters—would see them through several lessons. That way, they at least wouldn't forget what they had already taken.

September also brought great droves of wild ducks, feeding on the fields; swarms of them getting ready to take off to a

warmer climate. The menfolk weren't satisfied to shoot a dozen or so; sometimes Betty was ready to scream, when she got home from school, and found about fifty stacked up on the back porch, ready to be picked and dressed. She got so she hated the sight, and even the smell of them roasting. Sometimes she stood for hours in the old summer kitchen, and picked and picked, by the light of a coal-oil lamp, her feet half-numb from the cold floor. Each time one of the long, slim black lice started up her arm, she broke out in gooseflesh, and under her breath she'd hiss, "Ducks! Ugh! How I hate the damn things!" Good thing Mom wasn't within hearing, or she would have boxed her ears, as she would not tolerate swearing from the girls.

Robby came down home from school in October for Thanksgiving, and then again for Halloween. Tonight all the young folks were going to a Halloween Dance in Town Hall. Robby drove over before supper, and asked Betty if she could go for a short ride. She told him that she could, so they took a seldom-used dirt road, out toward the Indian Reservation. They drove along in silence. Finally Robby eased the auto beside a bluff, stopped, and shut off the motor; then started fumbling in his pockets.

"Did you lose something?" Betty inquired, more to make conversation than anything else.

"No, Princess, I didn't lose anything. I could have sent this down to you, but I wanted to be present to give it to you personally." He pulled a flat, velvet box from his pocket and handed it to her, saying, "A very belated, but a very happy birthday wish, my dear."

"Oh, a surprise! I love surprises! What is it?" she asked.

He laughed as he watched her sit looking at the box, then turning it over and over in her hands; finally he suggested, "Well, open it, silly, and look inside."

As she touched the spring, the lid flew back, revealing a lovely blue necklace nestled on white satin. "Oh, how lovely

and beautiful, Robby! You shouldn't have gotten anything so expensive, and it is expensive, I can tell by the way it secretly winks at me."

"I hope I can always buy you beautiful things, my dear. Wouldn't you like to try it on? It should go nicely with your new dress that Elyse told me you had for tonight."

"Of course I want to try it on! Wish I had a mirror to see in, though." She lifted the necklace from the box, unclasped the hook, and placed it around her throat, then tried to do it up again. After several attempts Robby suggested, "Here let me see if I can manage to fasten it." He fumbled with it, but finally he hooked it and it stayed in place. He dropped his hands to her shoulders, and stared into her eyes, then in a half-bantering tone asked, "Don't I get a kiss or something?"

"Yes, of course, Robby, and thank you so much. It is so lovely, I'm almost afraid to keep it; and maybe Mom and Pop won't let me." She leaned close to him, placed her cool lips on his. As her lips touched his he caught his breath, then his arms went around her, and he drew her close, whispering as he did so, "Oh, my dear; you don't mind being my dear, do you?"

Immediately she pulled herself erect, then admitted, "I guess not; I really don't know. Let's be on our way back, shall we?"

"Please, not yet," he pleaded. "It's been such ages since I've seen you."

"Silly! Its only been a little over a month," she told him.

"Well, it's been the darndest, longest month I ever spent, then. Oh! By the way, why haven't you answered any of my letters?"

She had felt rather guilty about that when he gave her the necklace; nevertheless they were mushy. "Robby, you know I don't like mushiness, and those letters dripped. What if Pop or Margie had gotten hold of one? My life wouldn't have been worth living! I'd never hear the end of it!"

"But sweet, I meant every word," he replied. "They weren't intentionally mushy, and anyway they were meant only for you."

"Well, when you can write me a letter of some interest, I'll

answer, and not before then," she retorted rather flippantly.

"I promise the next one will really be educational, and . . . dry, too!" With that he started the motor of the automobile, and pulled back onto the road with a jerk. They rode along in silence, and Betty began to wonder if he really was angry with her. She edged over close beside him, then looked up at his set profile, and asked, "You mad at me, Robby? Please don't be, I promise to try and be real sweet for a change." When there was no answer from him, she continued, "Why do I have to be so flippant and smart-aleck all the time?"

He reached out with one hand, found hers, and squeezed it. "That's the reason I like you, I guess, but sometimes it takes me a while to get my wind back, after one of your onslaughts."

"I'm hateful, Robby! I should be more careful, but it seems the words slip out before I realize what I've said. It isn't that I want to be nasty, but I seem to resent somehow anyone who tries to possess me, or make me feel obligated or something . . . oh, I don't know what it is!"

"It's nothing to be ashamed of, my dear," he assured her. "It's just a very great independence, and pride, too. Some day I hope you will come to me and say, 'I've been independent long enough' . . . but that's a long way in the future; at least it won't be before we're grown up a bit more. However, I'm very sure I shall not change in my feelings toward you, but life pulls some funny tricks sometimes."

"Such serious conversation doesn't seem to suit the occasion," she offered. "It's more a celebration! My lovely gift . . . you home for a whole weekend . . . and an exciting dance tonight. Wish they had made it a masquerade, though, as first planned."

"Masquerades are fun, if you haven't anyone you're particularly interested in; then they are the bunk. Your girl is always off dancing with some prince, or someone in a dashing costume."

"Well that would work both ways, wouldn't it?" she asked, and gave him a merry glance.

"It would not, and you know it!" he exclaimed with some heat, and started to say more, but they were back in the yard

again, so Betty suggested she had better get out and dash in for supper, or she would never be ready to go to the dance later. She called over her shoulder, "See you in a couple of hours! And thanks again."

"We'll be along about eight," he shouted, as he swung the auto into a wide circle and left the yard.

Just as she was about to enter the door, she suddenly stopped, reached up and unclasped the necklace, and carefully placed it back on its satin bed, then she went on in. Everyone was at the supper table, so she dropped into her chair, placing the velvet box on her lap, but Margie's sharp eyes had seen it in her hand, and she asked, "What's in the elegant box, Sis?"

"A birthday present from Robby," she replied, then quietly asked, "May I please have the meat and potatoes?"

"Oh! Just like that!" Margie pitched her voice in imitation, "A birthday present from Robby! You'd think, to hear you, you were accustomed to receiving gifts every day! Come on, let's see!"

"I don't have to show you when you act so smart!" Betty snapped.

"Well, you keep your old present, and see who cares!" Margie was ready to work herself into a tirade, when Mom's quiet voice interrupted, "That will be enough, Margie!" Then she turned to Betty and asked, "Show us, won't you? I'm dying of curiosity."

Betty took the velvet box from her lap, and handed it to Mom, but said as she did so, "Margie don't have to be so flip; just you wait, young lady, and I'll fix you! You wait and see!" And she glared at her.

Mom touched the spring of the box, then exclaimed, "How beautiful, my dear!" She looked at it for several seconds, then added, "But darling, I'm afraid it's far too expensive a gift for a young lady to take from a friend." She handed the box to Pat, and asked, "What do you think, dear?"

"Gosh, it's sure elegant!" he agreed, then asked Betty, "What did Robby say when he gave it to you?" and he awaited her reply.

"I exclaimed over how beautiful it was, and told him it was

far too expensive for me to accept, but he would not take it back; he said he had wanted to get it for me, and I was not to feel obligated to him in any way for it; and he also said he was just showing how much he had enjoyed my friendship. There was some more conversation, but I don't remember what, just now."

Pat's eyes twinkled at her, and he mused, "I can just bet there was more said, but we won't ask you what," and he turned his glance to Margie. "We're not interested, are we?"

"The heck we're not!" she exclaimed, "but if you're through looking, Loretta and I would love to see it." Pat passed it along, and both girls oh'd and ah'd over its beauty.

"Golly!" Loretta suggested then. "You'd think he'd seen your new dress, to match the color so perfectly. Bet Elyse had something to do with that."

But Betty's mind went back to that first party at the Stewarts', when they sat on the stairs for midnight supper, and he had complimented her on her blue dress, and said it was a color she should always wear. She agreed in her own mind that she felt better in blue than in any other color.

Mom broke into her thoughts with, "Well, I guess you can keep it, although it is expensive, for, knowing Robby as we do, I'm sure his intentions are beyond reproach. Do you agree, Pat?"

"Yes, I guess so—" he hesitated, then added, "although I really don't approve of kids exchanging such elaborate gifts. It's nice to remember one another, but a little more moderately, I think." He made a mental note to speak to Robby about it, the first chance he had when it would not embarrass the boy.

Mom changed the subject then, as she could see so much conversation directed toward Betty was upsetting her. "Hadn't you girls better hurry? You rinse and stack the dishes, then run along and get yourselves prettied up. Pop will give me a hand with them later, won't you dear?"

"I'll dry them when you're ready," he assured her.

Soon after the girls went upstairs, Robby, Elyse, and Don arrived. Mom called for them to come on in the house and

wait. "You'd better remove your coat, Elyse, so you won't catch cold when you go out again, as it's pretty warm in here. Oh! How pretty you look tonight, Elyse!"

Elyse was dazzling in an ivory satin dress, and with her flashing eyes and black curls she made Mary think of southern beauties she'd read about in novels. "You youngsters make yourselves at home, and chat with Pat," Mary suggested. "I'll run up and see how the girls are coming along." As she entered Betty and Loretta's room, she found the place overflowing, it seemed. Things were every which way, clothes on the bed, hanging from chairs, and in every conceivable spot. "This place looks like a tornado hit it," she laughed, then asked, "Are you about ready?"

"Almost, Mom," Betty answered from where she stood in front of the mirror, putting final touches to her hair. Mom walked up behind her, and glanced into the mirror too. "Betty!" she exclaimed, "do you have rouge on?"

"Why of course, Mom," she quietly answered.

"Well you can take it off this instant!" she snapped. "You're far too young for that!"

"Oh Mom, please don't be so old-fashioned. Everyone wears it nowadays," and she went on fixing her hair.

"Why do you have to paint yourself up like a circus monkey? Look Loretta doesn't have any on, and she is older than you are."

"Oh, she'd like to, but she promised her dear Jack she wouldn't, that's the only reason she hasn't," Betty snapped.

"Well young lady, you can just take it off, or stay at home," Mom told her in that final voice of hers.

An expression of stubbornness set itself on Betty's face. She left the mirror and calmly seated herself on the edge of the bed. "Okay then, I'll stay home, for I've heard remarks about how pale I am, and a little color would help. It's this darn Irish complexion!"

Just then Margie screamed for Mom to come and give her a hand. She gave Betty a helpless look, and went to Margie's room, wondering to herself what was the best procedure under the circumstances. When she was out of sight and hearing, Lo-

retta pleaded, "Please, Betts, take it off. Put it on later if you want, but right now you're upsetting Mom something terrible."

"I will not take it off, and put it on later," she snapped, "that's undercover, and I hate things like that. I'll just stay home!"

Loretta sat down beside her then and said, "Oh, please, Sis, don't be like that. I won't go either, if you don't."

When Mom came back into the room, she found both girls seated on the edge of the bed. They sat there in dead silence, so she turned to Margie, who was at her heels, and said, "Go downstairs, and quietly ask Pop to please come here."

Pat blustered into the room, asking as he did so, "What's this, a private showing of the new gowns?" Then he sensed the tenseness in the room, and demanded, "What in thunderation is going on here?"

"Betty insists on having rouge on her cheeks, and I've told her she can remove it or stay home; so there they sit like a couple of balky mules," Mom explained.

He looked at the two girls, then said, "Okay, let's break it up! You first, Loretta, stand up!" She stood and waited, so he went on, "Now step over here, turn around!" She did as he asked. "That pink lace looks lovely on you, my dear, especially with those blue eyes, and blonde braids. I like the way you have them fixed, like a queen's tiara. You pass inspection with a big bang! Now will you take your coat, and join the others downstairs?" She picked it up, and started to leave, then he asked, "Haven't you forgotten something?"

She quickly turned back, kissed both him and Mom, and murmured as she left, "Thanks, you two!"

"Okay, Margie, let's have a look-see at you." She pivoted in front of him, making her accordion-pleated skirt stand out around her. "Just like a fairy in a fairy tale," Pat suggested, "only the face carries the expression of an imp." He pinched her cheek, then added, "But I'm especially fond of imps"; then he kissed her and told her to wait downstairs. She kissed Mom, too, then danced out of the room.

"Now what's the war between you two?" he asked.

"I told you," Mary replied, "she's bound to go to the dance

with that rouge on her face, and she's far too young for that."

"What's your argument, chicken?"

"I tried to tell Mom," she explained, "that when I've been in the cloakroom at dances, I've heard some of the older women comment on how pale or white I am, so I thought a little rouge would offset that."

"But Mom thinks you are too young!"

"I don't see where age has anything to do with it," Betty argued.

"Well, stand up, and let's see the effect," he said, and moved over beside Mary, and put his arm around her waist. "Now walk the length of the room, turn around and walk back."

She did as she was told, and when she stood in front of them again, Pat said, "The new dress is certainly elegant, and the necklace sure sets it off, doesn't it, Mary?" She agreed it did. Then he took Betty by the arm, and led her in front of the mirror. "Now I'm going to show you what upset Mom." He picked up a cloth from the dresser, and lightly blended the rouge, first on one cheek, then the other; dipped the puff into the powder jar, and lightly powdered over it all, remarking as he did so, "If you must put artificial color on—although personally I like the alabaster white of an Irish skin—then put it on so that it looks natural. I'm not surprised Mom was horror-stricken when she saw you. Now look! Isn't that better?"

Betty looked into the mirror, and saw a faint tinge of pink on each cheek, just enough to pick up the blue of her eyes. She turned to face Mom, and Pat asked, "Will that pass your inspection, Mary?"

"Yes, it looks all right now, but I still don't approve of children wearing rouge," she quietly and stubbornly answered.

"You'd think I was about ten years old!" Betty flared.

"Watch your tongue, young lady!" Pat cautioned. "Don't go getting too big for your britches, or I might take a notion to switch you, even if you are fifteen."

Suddenly she realized she had won her argument over the rouge, so she was contrite immediately, and threw her arms around Mom's neck, "I'm sorry, Mom!" she admitted. "I'm a ter-

rible pain in the neck sometimes, I guess. Please forgive me, eh?"

"Yes, dear," Mom answered, and hugged her tight. "You'll be the death of me one of these days," but she laughed to soften her words. "Come on now, and let's join your friends, as they have been waiting ages."

Betty kissed Pop, and he squeezed her hand to let her know he understood perfectly; then the three of them proceeded down the stairs. Loretta's and Margie's eyes flew to Betty's face, and when they saw the rouge still there, even though modified, they knew she had won her battle with Mom again. They both envied her the way she usually won these arguments, as they never seemed able to manage so easily.

When the youngsters were finally gone, and Pat was drying the dishes for Mary, he asked, "Why is it there's always that battle between you and Betty?"

"I don't know, Pat, but she's so darn set in her ways it just sort of rubs me the wrong way, I guess."

"Well she comes by that pretty honestly, as it's no easy thing to change your mind either, you know," he suggested.

"Yes, I guess you're right," she agreed. "It's lucky we have you around to straighten out our problems for us, but I notice I'm usually the one who loses in the end. When you get done with me, I'm beginning to wonder what the argument was all about to start with." Then she laughed up at his grinning Irish face, and said, "You browbeat me into agreeing, that's what you do!" She hesitated, then added, "But do I love it?"

"So I browbeat you? Why you minx, I'll fix you later," he threatened.

"Hush, Pat!" she whispered, "Jim will hear you!"

Later, when little Jan had been tucked into bed, and Jim had retired to his room, Pat sat looking at Mary. Feeling his gaze upon her, she flushed, then asked, "What deviltry are you hatching up, Pat Mann?"

"You'd be surprised, colleen!" he replied, then noncommittally asked, "It's about bedtime, isn't it?"

She glanced at him quickly, then said, "Yes, I guess so, you bully!"

He went over to the stove, shook the coals down, and prepared kindling for morning. Mary lit a small lamp to take upstairs, then waited while he put out the hanging one. She proceeded him up the stairs and, when she was almost to the top, he reached up and pinched her. She turned on him like a wild woman, "Why you heathen, I'll certainly fix you for that! I could have dropped the lamp, and set the house on fire! Shhh! Please be quiet!"

"Quiet! Quiet! That's all I ever hear! One of these days, I'm going to make as much noise as a roaring bull, just for pure satisfaction."

Mary took a peek to see how Jan was, and carefully tucked the bedclothes around her again; then she came back into their room again, and closed the door after her. Pat was already in bed, so she ducked the light, and got in on her side. Immediately he rolled over beside her, and started to put his arm around her. She shoved at him, and said, "No! Just for that wicked pinch, you can go straight to sleep."

"Now darlin', what kind of a way is that to act? How the devil am I supposed to follow you up the stairs, and not be tempted?"

"Then in the future you can proceed me," she suggested. "Please, Pat! Stop mauling me!"

"Stop I'll not," he hissed, then changed his tone and coaxed, "Please, darlin', I just want to put my head on your shoulder; I'll be good, I promise."

"An Irishman's promises about being good are a lot of marlarchy, but all right, you can put your head on my shoulder, if you promise to go straight to sleep." She moved one arm under his head, and he nestled his head on it. He lay quiet for a few minutes, then nibbled at her ear. "Pat, stop it!" He paid not the slightest attention, and soon was planting hot kisses on her throat and bosom. She kept her body stiff and rigid, but as he kept kissing her, he felt her relax against him; then her arms folded around him, and held him close. She breathed endearments one minute . . . admonished him the next.

A first winter snow had fallen, covering everything as if with a white, feathery down. It was early Sunday morning—in fact, it hadn't broken daylight yet—and at least a dozen riding horses were tethered to the yard fence. Lying here and there in the yard were about eighteen or twenty hounds. In the house was much laughter and good cheer, as several men and some of the younger women were congregated enjoying steaming cups of Mary's good strong coffee. They were all going on a coyote hunt, as the fields were becoming overrun with them, and several packs had picked up wolves as their leaders. A coyote by himself was pretty much a coward, but once a wolf joined them, they became vicious and plundered everything in their path.

Pat, Betty, and Margie were joining the group, and this would be their first experience of this kind. They had fixed a box on the back of a light sled, to put the hounds in until they sighted a coyote, or at least picked up his trail. Pat and Margie were going on the sled, but Betty was riding Ponto. Pat rigged up a sawed-off shotgun for her to carry, which was what most of the others carried too. Mary was nervous as usual where guns were concerned, as she could not see how they were going to avoid shooting one another, when there were so many of them. However, some of the older men, who were accustomed to hunting this way, assured her it would be perfectly safe.

The procession started out in the gray dawn, Pat in the lead with the team, the horsebackers close behind in a group. They went west from the house, toward the reservation, as there were fewer fences that way. When they had covered less than a mile, Pat picked up a trail in the new-fallen snow. He signaled to the riders, and they grouped closer behind the sled. Margie was having a terrific time keeping the hounds quiet. She spoke to them through a small peephole in the front end of the box, but most of them had been on these expeditions before, and knew what was coming. They were impatient to be out on the trail, picking up the scent.

Finally Pat sighted a big fellow, standing on a small knoll. He no sooner saw him than the animal loped away to the north. He shouted and pointed, but most of the riders had seen him too.

Margie pulled the trapdoor of the box, and the hounds piled out, one over the other. A big gray hound found the trail, and the rest followed, and in no time dogs and riders disappeared over the knoll. Pat whipped up the team, and they broke into a gallop after the rest. Such a racket, as dogs barked, and hunters yipped at the top of their voices.

As the cold wind whipped at Betty's face, she thought: Oh, wonderful thrill! This is really living! Isn't it Ponto? The pony seemed to be in his glory, and they were up in the front group, as there were few horses could keep up with his flying feet. Betty saw the coyote almost three quarters of a mile ahead of them; . . . then her eyes saw also a three-strand barbed-wire fence as it loomed up in front of her. Harry Burns who was on her right yelled, "Will your pony take the fence?"

"I've never tried him, I don't know!" she called back.

"Lay low on his neck, and urge him up over if you can, but be ready for a jolt, if he balks at it," he cautioned.

She saw three or four of the bigger horses, as they leaped it, almost as if it hadn't been there. Her heart was pounding hard, and her breath came in gasps, but she leaned low on the pony's neck, talked to him, and urged him. She saw his ears flick forward as the first horses cleared the fence, then he laid them straight back on his head. Betty closed her eyes, but she felt the force of his body as he prepared to take the leap; then her heart almost stopped, as she heard his hind feet hit the wire on his way over. She braced herself and waited for the fall, but nothing happened, so she quickly opened her eyes, and looked down at his feet. There was a showing of blood, but the pony hadn't slackened his speed; however, she kept her eye on them.

Harry shouted again, "He did a good job of it, for a first try!"

"But he cut his feet some on the top wire, do you suppose I should pull him out?"

"If they don't bleed hard enough to leave a trail in the snow, he'll be all right. Keep an eye on them, though," he advised.

The pony kept his speed, and now they were gaining on the coyote. The hounds started making more racket than ever, if that was possible, then coyote and dogs disappeared into a bluff.

One man yelled, "We've got him now!" They surrounded the bluff, and when he didn't come out immediately, they dropped the reins over their horses' heads, and made their way into the underbrush on foot. Betty decided she didn't want to be in on the kill, so she dismounted to inspect the pony's legs. He had two pretty good gashes, but some ointment and bandages would fix them up in a couple of days. She'd perhaps have to ride Pop's big, ornery black to school for a few days.

She looked up and saw Margie and Pop as they came closer with the team and sled. When they got near enough for conversation, Pop called, "Gosh, kid! You scared us stiff, when you kept going at that fence. We expected you to veer south and take the gate, like some of them did." He pulled up beside her, then said, "Saw you looking at his feet; did he get cut?"

"Yes, he grazed the top wire, but they're not very deep."

"Golly, Sis! Was that ever a swan-dive you and Ponto did over that fence! What did it feel like?" Margie asked.

"I hardly know, it all happened so quick! I just shut my eyes tight, then felt his body give a leap; when his feet hit the wire, I expected him to fall, as I was sure it would throw him off balance, but we landed as nice as you please."

"I'll bet it was a thrill, eh?" Margie then asked.

"And how!" She turned back to Pop, who was inspecting Ponto's feet and legs. "They're not very bad, are they, Pop?"

"No, they'll be okay with a little doctoring, but I wouldn't run him any more today," he suggested. "Guess I'll go on in the bluff. . . . Oh, there they got him, I'll bet!" as two shots rang out. Pop took off on the run to find out who finally got him. When he came up to the group, Bob Stewart and Harry Burns were arguing that they each had gotten him. Pat stepped up and asked, "Well why don't you toss a coin, and see who gets the hide for bounty? It's pretty hard to tell which of you got him first, as your shots were almost together." He pulled a coin from his pocket and asked, "Who wants heads? and who tails?"

"I'll take heads," Bob spoke up first.

"It's tails for me then," Harry agreed.

Pat tossed the coin, it fell to the ground, and sank into the

soft snow. He carefully pushed the snow aside, and there lay the coin, showing heads. "It's yours, Bob," he told them.

"Well, thanks, Harry," Bob remarked, and walked over and rubbed his hand and shook it.

"That's okay, Mr. Stewart," Harry told him. "It was likely yours anyway, as my shooting isn't always up to par."

As they came out of the bluff, the womenfolk crowded around to look. "Golly! He's a whopper!" Betty exclaimed. As she touched it he said, "They sure have nice fur, haven't they? I've never seen close to one before." Mr. Stewart dropped the coyote at her feet, and she continued, "It's almost white, I thought they were a sort of tan color."

"This fellow is exceptionally light, almost a cream color, but usually they are tan, Betty," he explained. "Of course they lighten in color during the winter. Would you like to have it, Betty? As long as you've never seen one close, you can't have any rugs of them." He turned to Pat and told him where to leave the pelt to be tanned, and made into a rug. "They make wonderful rugs for your bedside, Betty; nice and cozy to step out on, these cold mornings."

"Golly! Thanks, Mr. Stewart, but are you sure you wish me to have it?"

"Everyone at my house has one for their bedside," he assured her.

"But what about the bounty you'd get?"

"It wouldn't amount to much anyway, and you'll get far more out of it as a rug," he then answered.

"Well, thanks again!"

The hounds were corralled then, and they seemed ready to get in, as they were tired from their long run. Everyone decided to call it a morning, and they started home for breakfast. They all agreed they had a hearty appetite worked up.

Pat, Betty, and Margie stayed at the barn a long time. First they rubbed down the hot horses; then they washed and bandaged Ponto's legs. As they got ready to start to the house, Pat heaved the coyote upon his back, to take down to show Mary and the rest. Trusty was very unhappy over the whole situation. First

he had not liked the yard full of strange dogs this morning, and now the odor of the coyote was driving him wild.

Mary couldn't believe her eyes, when she saw Pat heave the carcass onto the veranda, and she called for Loretta and Janet to come look.

"Who got the lucky shot?" Mary asked as she glanced from one to the other.

Betty spoke up first, and said, "Neither of us Mom, it was either Mr. Stewart or Harry Burns. They tossed a coin, and Mr. Stewart won. He gave it to me to have made into a rug. Wasn't that nice?"

"Very nice, dear," Mary admitted. "I've seen them in some of the homes we've visited, and I thought they must be wonderfully warm and cozy to put one's feet onto, on a cold nippy morning." Then she changed the subject, and asked, "I'll bet you're all starved. Come on in! . . . we've got buckwheats stirred up, and bacon and eggs ready to go. How does that sound?"

"Perfectly elegant!" both girls exclaimed at once.

"Like a king's breakfast," Pat agreed, then said, "I'll toss this fellow in the granary." When he came in the house he asked, "Where's Jim?"

"Oh, he ate ages ago, and he's out giving my chickenhouses a going-over this morning." Finally she asked, "Well, come on! Wasn't there any excitement?"

"Oh Mom, you should have seen Betty and Ponto take the fence! That was really exciting!" Margie exclaimed.

"What do you mean, 'take the fence'?" she asked, and looked from one to the other.

"Jump it!" Margie offered as explanation, before anyone else could answer. "Right over the top, like a bird, they went. Ponto did fine for his first time; he's just got a couple of small cuts on his legs."

"I don't believe I quite understand," Mom hesitated, then added, "Maybe you better explain, Betty."

She started to reply, but Pat put in and said, "Most of the men take their horses right over the fences. However, some of them, and the womenfolk, generally go through the gates. But

Mary, it was a sight to see, I can tell you! Tell Mom how it was, Betty."

"Well, I was so busy looking after the coyote I did not see the fence until I was practically upon it. Harry shouted for me to lay low on Ponto's neck, and urge him over if I could, but to be ready for a big jolt if he balked at it. I really didn't have time to do much thinking; I saw him flick his ears forward, when the first horses started over, then I shut my eyes tight, and felt the force of his body as he went over, but really didn't see anything myself. I heard his hoofs hit the top wire, and I braced myself for his fall, but he landed pretty as you please. That's about all, except of course, it was a wonderful thrill!"

Mom did not answer immediately, then rather sternly she said, "I'm not quite sure I like that. Pop just got finished saying the other women and girls went through the gate. Why couldn't you, too? Why do you always have to be the only one doing such things? It doesn't sound very ladylike to me!"

"Oh Mom, don't be like that! It was wonderful!"

"Well, it's done now, but I'll thank you not to repeat it," she answered in a positive tone. "I'd worry myself sick every time you went. Anyway I don't think the whole procedure is meant for girls; seems more a sport for men."

"Now Mary, come down off your high horse!" Pat put in. "Remember, you're not back in the States, but out in a new country, and the habits and conditions are different here."

"Well, you cannot make me believe it's a ladylike pastime, cavorting over the fields on horseback, with a sawed-off shotgun slung over your shoulder!" she snapped. "It's more like a lady bandit would act!"

"Well, I believe in that old expression, 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do,' and none of the folks around here seem to think anything of the womenfolk taking part in such sports," Pat told her.

"All right," she agreed, "I guess I'll have to take it, even though I don't like it; but the fence-jumping part sounds dangerous, and I cannot give my consent to that."

Betty started to make some retort, but Pop's eyes said, "No

more conversation right now," so she gulped, and instead meekly replied, "Okay, Mom," for she knew Pop would come to the rescue in his own way.

Later the girls fixed up some hurdles in the yard, and Margie even put old Puck through his paces. Mary watched on several occasions, and when she saw the ease with which Ponto cleared them, she lost her nervousness about it, and finally of her own accord consented for Betty to "jump" him whenever she wished.

The long tiresome winter dragged itself along. Dark, gray, cold days; so much snow heaped up everywhere. Pat had said it was almost impossible for the animals to paw their way down through it, to the brown, crisp grass underneath. However, Pat had never believed in turning his stock out to forage completely. He would let them out in the mornings, to run all day, but each night they were brought back to their warm stables.

A great many people let their stock out in the fall, and did not corral them again until spring. Often they could be seen grazing by the roadside, and they looked like furry bears, with their long, winter coat. That first winter in Canada, the Manns had been amazed at the heavy coat of hair the horses grew, and would not believe it when their neighbors told them they would have to be clipped before spring work started. Sure enough, Pat had to put out some of his scarce dollars to buy a clipping outfit, as his horses had still been covered with long hair at seeding time.

Practically every morning now was wrapped in a gray blanket of fog. The trees, fences, telephone wires—everything, in fact—were covered with about an inch and a half of hoarfrost. The telephone wires hung almost to the ground with the weight of it. Betty was always amazed as she rode along the road and heard the singing of the wires. She made up songs to herself in tune to the humming of them. The mornings might have been gray, but when the sun struggled through, about noon, it looked like an enchanted fairyland. Everything glittered and shone from the hoarfrost; even each little tiny twig seemed as if it were studded with a million diamonds. Not like a real world at all, it was so beautiful!

Spring and summer of 1916 were busy days in the Mann household. The seeding was scarcely done, potatoes planted, and garden in, than company started arriving. Grandpa and Grandma Mann came first, and they were greeted with great enthusiasm. The children had not seen them since they were small, so really could not remember them at all, except as they had been fixed in their minds through letters exchanged all these years. They were just becoming accustomed to one set of grandparents, when Grandpa and Grandma Doyle arrived. Mary was almost beside herself; she had been very happy to see Pat's mother and father, but when her own parents arrived it was almost more than she could take. They had kept it a complete surprise, and no one had any inkling they were contemplating such a trip. Immediately she began to wonder where she was going to put them to sleep. Already Margie and Jan had been moved to Betty's and Loretta's room. However, before she had time to get it settled in her mind, Jim settled it for her. He suggested she and Pat take his room, and let her parents have their room. When she asked where he thought he was going to sleep, he told her he had seen a couple of extra beds stored in the granary, and that he could manage very nicely in one of the granary rooms, as the weather was warm now. Mary thanked him, and he took a jump up in her estimation, as she had not previously thought him very considerate; but she decided it was just that he was older than they were, and seldom took any part in their conversations.

That first night at supper, after the arrival of the second set of grandparents, Betty asked, "Just how are we going to distinguish two sets of grandparents?"

They all laughed and agreed it was rather a problem. Grandpa Mann spoke up first and said, "It must really seem quite a problem; all these years, no grandma or grandpa, then suddenly you have four of them thrust upon you."

Betty decided she liked him so much. She liked his twinkling blue eyes, which seemed to see everything. She quickly answered, "Oh, it's perfectly elegant to have two grandpas and two grandmas, but we've got to find some way to distinguish you."

"You could call them Grandpa and Grandma Mann, and Grandpa and Grandma Doyle," Pat suggested.

"Yes," Betty agreed, "but it doesn't seem warm enough; more like you were speaking of your friends' grandparents."

The grandparents beamed upon her, and each had his own thoughts on what a brilliant granddaughter they had.

However, Mary made a suggestion that they might use their Christian names, such as Grandpa Bob and Grandma Anne, for the Mann grandparents; and Grandpa Tom and Grandma Betty, for Mary's father and mother.

Betty looked at Mom's mother then, and remarked, "I didn't know you were Betty, too."

"Yes, honey, you were named after me, I guess."

"Who was I named after?" Margie then asked.

"Me, I think," Grandma Mann put in.

"But Mom just said you were Anne," Margie replied, and looked from one to the other.

Grandma Mann laughed, then said, "Well, I'm really Margaret Anne, and I always used Margaret, until I married your grandfather, but he got the idea to call me Maggie, so I just dropped Margaret, and decided to call myself Anne; but a lot of good it did, for as far as Grandpa is concerned, I'm still Maggie to him."

Betty spoke up then, and said, "I like Maggie better than I do Anne. Do you mind if I call you Grandma Maggie? Suits you better than Anne, I think."

"No dear, I'm more used to Maggie anyway, and I perhaps wouldn't feel natural as Anne. But why do you think it suits me?"

Pat's eyes twinkled at his mother and he said, "I can tell you better than she can. It's because you're freckled, and kinda fat and dumpy, like a real Irish Maggie should be."

"Why, you Irish heathen!" she exclaimed. "To think I'd live to be insulted by my own son."

"Insulted my eye!" he told her. "And it's insulted you'd be, if I proclaimed you were a 'sweet angel,' and you know it."

Mary was rather alarmed over the turn the conversation was taking, as she had never in her life spoken to her parents in

such tones, and she glanced quickly to see how they were taking it. Her father was looking rather stern, but her mother seemed to be enjoying it thoroughly. However, she decided to turn the conversation into other channels, so started inquiring about other members of the two families.

Grandpa Mann spoke up during the discussion of the families and, looking at Pat, said, "It wouldn't surprise me if your brother Bill's two kids didn't make their way up here this summer."

"You mean young Bill and—what's her name?—Marty, isn't it?" he inquired.

"Yes, that's the two," Grandpa agreed.

"Is it possible they are old enough to travel alone?" Mary asked.

"Oh, sure," Grandma Maggie put in. "William is nineteen, and Martha was seventeen last month." She turned to the girls and added, "You children will enjoy them, for I can tell you right here and now, they are a couple of live wires."

"Gosh! That's going to be fun!" Betty exclaimed. "Just imagine your own cousins, whom you didn't hardly know existed, coming to visit. We'll have to plan all sorts of things."

"Well, they won't be along until school is out—if they come," Pat's mother answered. "William's in University, and Marty will graduate high school in June. Marty is quite clever in school, and she plays the piano very nicely."

"We understand you have a very nice voice, my dear," Grandma Doyle spoke up, directing her remark to Betty. "You'll have to sing something for us, when we've finished eating."

Betty inclined her head, and hastily applied knife and fork to her food. However, Mary answered for her and said, "Yes, she is doing very well. I wrote all of you that she won the scholarship last year, didn't I?"

"Yes you did, Mary, and Grandma and I were mighty proud of that," Pat's father said. "Guess you folks felt the same way, didn't you, Mr. Doyle?"

"Yes, yes, we were very proud of that," he answered in his precise voice, but he smiled at Betty. He then turned to them all and said, "I think I would like to suggest that as long as we

are all so closely related here, and one big family—that Mr. and Mrs. Mann, Sr., and Mother and I should dispense with the formality, and call one another by our first names. Mary's letters have always been full of this and that about Pat's mother and father, so we really feel like we have known you folks for years."

"Nothing would suit us better, Tom! That's a splendid idea," Grandpa Mann answered him.

Everyone was through eating, so the older folks retired to the parlor, and the girls got busy with the dishes. When they finished, Betty sang a couple of songs for them, and the grandparents complimented her over and over, and wanted to know all about her plans for the future.

She told them that it was very much in the future, but she would like to go on to Toronto, to the Conservatory of Music, when she was graduated next year. Of course there was always the uncertainty of a bad wheat-crop, which would eliminate any such expensive plans. They agreed it was a nice future to work toward, and she should make every effort to carry it out.

Then Mary made the suggestion that they retire, as she was sure her mother and father were tired from their long train-ride. When she and Pat were settled for the night in Jim's room, she tucked her head on his shoulder and sighed, "What a day! Do you suppose I'm going to pull through this summer?"

"Yes, darlin', with flying colors! You just wait and see! I know you are worried about your Pa, but he looks like he may have mellowed with the years, and I'm sure he and Dad are going to hit it off fine."

"I hope so, Pat," she answered, "but Pa has always been so stern. I never worry about Ma, she is always sweet and cooperative. I'll just die if Pa decides to put on one of his stand-offish acts."

"Don't even think such things," Pat advised, and kissed her cheek. "You're usually a magician when it comes to keeping peace—that is with practically everyone except Betty—but I'll caution her to try and be on her good behavior this summer, if that's possible."

"Oh, Betty's growing up! We don't always see eye to eye, but

we seldom scream at one another any more. About the only time we have differences now is when I'm trying to do some sewing for her, and then, believe me, I do lose patience. You'd wonder where she gets her ideas; and once she has them, I don't think you could change her mind, even if you threatened her with death," and she gave an amused laugh.

"Well you have to admit, she usually looks pretty nice, even if her clothes aren't always made to a standard pattern."

"Yes, I guess so," Mary admitted rather reluctantly.

"Bet you're tired out, aren't you, darlin'?"

"I certainly am, Pat, and I'm half asleep already. I'll see you in the morning," she mumbled in reply.

"Good night, dear," he replied, and flopped over to his side of the bed. Mary, half asleep, wondered if all men flopped in bed, instead of rolling over quietly.

Bill and Marty Mann arrived June 30, just in time to join in the July 1 celebration the next day. Such a wonderful day they all had, and Bill and Marty decided immediately they liked Canada and their new cousins very much.

Both were handsome children. Bill, big, tall and broad-shouldered, could have been Pat's own son, and in fact many times during the summer he and Betty were taken for brother and sister. Marty was a wee, whiff of a thing, just about as big as a minute. She had soft brown eyes, which she knew how to use; and she had the local boys at her beck and call from the first moment they saw her. She and Betty got along very well, considering they were so entirely different. Betty, with her independent manner, could not quite understand Marty, with her helpless ways, but she had to admit it worked marvels with the boys. Even Bill, her brother, was at her service any time she wanted him. He just laughed at her helplessness, and thought she was cute. Robby, too, seemed to think she needed some extra-special attention. It sort of burned Betty, but she wouldn't have admitted it to a soul, for anything in the world. But, she and Bill got along marvelously, and it seemed they had always

known one another. However, he sometimes teased her unmercifully, and they would have a good old-fashioned Irish set-to, screaming at one another, as if they would never be friends again, but as quickly as it started you'd find it over, and they would be off somewhere, arm in arm, as if nothing had happened.

Bill fell with a thud, under the spell of Elyse's black eyes, and poor reliable Don was pushed into the discard; but he did not stay there long, for Marty rescued him, and in no time at all he was running here and there, as he tried to fill her every little wish.

All considered, it was a very gay summer, but the end of August saw all the company gone home again. The house seemed lost, after so many weeks of confusion, but to Mary at least it was good—oh, so good!—just to go about her work, and not worry whether everyone was having a good time; whether the older folks were comfortable; whether the proper food was being prepared for them; and a thousand little things which she had to worry about each day. But most of all she had worried about whether the two sets of grandparents were getting along together, and whether her mother and father approved the easy, happy ways of the Manns. All in all, it had been wonderful to have them; but gosh! it was wonderful to be alone again.

She had not worried about the young folks, for being young they could adjust themselves to circumstances. However, both Bill and Marty had assured her they had spent the very best time of their lives.

Betty's friends had been wild over them, and even though they poked fun at their mode of talking, and the accent they used, still, for months afterward they'd ask, "When are your Yankee cousins coming back?"

Spring 1917, brought new hope to the Allies, as the United States decided they had taken insults aplenty from Germany—the submarine warfare upon their merchant ships, also the trouble Germany had been trying to stir up between the States and Mexico, was more than any nation could take—so finally, on

April 6, 1917, they declared war upon her, and immediately trained and sent overseas nearly two million soldiers. Many more were being trained and held in reserve. They started Liberty Loan drives, and raised billions, some of which they used to buy food for those hungry Europeans who had hardly had anything to eat for the past three years of war. The effect of the United States' entry into the war raised the spirits of those Allies, who had been sunk in the throes of a terrible exhaustion, and it wasn't long until the words were on everyone's lips, "The Yankees have got the Heinies on the run! They pushed them back again today!"

On the home front, everyone felt better after the States entered the war to help out; but it was still hard work at home, especially for the older men, and the womenfolk, who had to take their places doing the field work. Even the stores in town closed for half days, in order that everyone might go out to give the farmers a hand. Many were the sore, tired muscles, and blistered hands during that period.

In the Mann household, the girls worked side by side with Pat and Jim. Mom stayed at the house to prepare meals, but even she took up chores Pat had never allowed her to do before; such as swilling the pigs, feeding the new calves, and so on. Each time she fed the calves, and one of them decided to bunt the pail out of her hands, she would go over all the dire things she would like to do to the stubborn thing. The Lord never made anything more ornery than a calf which one tried to teach to drink out of a pail. Sometimes when she'd leave the barn, after a siege with them, she'd find herself in a pool of sweat, and would be talking out loud to herself. On one such occasion, she caught herself up quickly, and thought, I better stop that, for if someone should hear me, they'd be sure I was ready for the booby-hatch, and sometimes I'm beginning to think I am! But other times her Irish disposition would come to the fore, and she could laugh about the whole procedure.

When June and examinations were over, Betty wondered how she had managed to pass, as she had been absent so much, giving Pop a hand at home. Perhaps the Board of Examiners

had taken all that into consideration, for everyone in her class had got through; now they would all be together again in the fall, when they would enter their last year of high school.

Even though the summer brought long, tiresome days of work, there was still fun, for Pat had got the long-cherished automobile last fall. One of the first things he did was teach Loretta and Betty to drive it, and he promised Margie she could learn this fall. Mary stood firm in her refusal to be taught to drive. However, Margie could perhaps drive it already, if given the chance, for when Pat purchased his tractor, she was one of the first to run it, and now she took her place upon it, and plowed and harrowed the fields, as if she were a man.

The automobile brought many new adventures, for it got you there so quickly. The young folks were able during the summer to take in the Saturday night dances at Ketepwa Beach. Then too there were excursions to B'Say'Tah for swimming and fishing. Beautiful B'Say'Tah, in the Qu'Appelle Valley, situated on the lakeside, with a long jut-out point, had become the place for summer vacationists. Several people had built summer cottages, and went there as soon as school was out. They spent the long, drowsy, summer days enjoying the cool breezes off the lake.

The Manns did not have a cottage at the lake, but had many friends who had, so they were often invited to spend their Sundays there. Early in the season Mr. and Mrs. Carroll rented a place, and while Mr. Carroll drove back and forth each day to work, Mrs. Carroll stayed there all summer. On this particular Sunday the Manns, Stewarts, and others were congregated for the day. Everyone except Mary had been swimming, or taken turns fishing from the rowboat. Now Pat was trying to coax her into going out to fish.

"But I don't know a thing about fishing, Pat," she argued.

"Well, you can't learn any younger, dear," he said as he hustled her toward the boat. Robby and Betty decided they would go along, too.

Pat rowed out a short distance, then told Robby to fix a troll-line for Mom. She got all settled with the line in her hand, then asked, "How am I supposed to know when I get a bite?" Robby

twitched the line gently, and told her it would feel something like that.

It was late afternoon, and the sun was getting ready to sink behind the hills in the west. A peaceful time of the day. There was scarcely a ripple on the water; the boat drifted along quietly, as Pat slowly applied the oars. Then the quiet was suddenly broken, as Mary sat up and exclaimed, "I've got a bite! It feels like a whale! What do I do now?"

Robby reached to take the line from her hand, but she glared at him, then snapped, "Don't touch the line! Just tell me what to do!"

Robby was so taken back by her sharp tone, he just sat and stared, but Betty and Pat laughed at her excitement. Finally Betty said, "Just start pulling in, Mom, only do it carefully and steadily; don't jerk the line, or you may lose him."

Mary did as she was told, and finally she could see the fish beside the boat; then she really got excited, and Pat had to caution her not to jump around so much, or she was going to tip the boat over. Then she handed the line to Robby, to finish bringing the fish in. It was a fine big pickerel. Mary's first fish! There was no stopping her then. Neither Robby nor Betty got so much as a nibble, but Mary kept catching them, one after the other.

Pat pleaded with her that it was getting late and they must start for home; also, there was a bank of clouds piling up over the hills, which didn't look too promising. Then and only then would she consent for him to row shoreward. Other members of their families, and friends too, were on the pier to meet them. One asked, "What in Heaven's name happened?" Another put in with, "We were really getting worried, you were gone so long."

When Pat and Robby held up some of the fish for inspection, Stan asked, "Who had all the luck?"

"We didn't even get a nibble," Robby replied. "Just Mom Mary had all the luck! There was no stopping her after she caught the first one."

"Gosh! I thought you said you didn't know how to fish, Mary," Stan then said.

"That's true," she assured him, "this was my very first time. It was sure fun, though! Here, Robby, give me a hand!" as she started to step from the boat.

Pat laughed to himself, and quietly said, "What a woman! And she thinks Betty's unpredictable; Betty comes by that honestly enough."

Last June Robby had completed his University course, and true to his promise to himself, he became the proud owner of a prizewinning Aberdeen Angus bull, and three nice, blooded heifers. Elyse had to come to his rescue, however, for after the bull was purchased, he had only enough money left to buy one heifer. She drew out some of her savings, and loaned him enough for two more, with the understanding that he was to pay her back as soon as he realized any money from them.

Shortly after he purchased them, he had Betty over to show them off. As they stood at the corral fence looking at them and talking, Elyse joined them and asked, "Aren't they beauties, Betty?" She agreed they were a sight to see, so sleek, shiny, and black; and gentle as kittens. Robby talked of shows, and the blue ribbons he planned to take. His plans carried him even to England, Scotland, and the United States to shows after the war was over. Betty hoped he wasn't planning too far ahead, as she wasn't able to visualize the tremendous field which he seemed to see without any effort at all. However, she gave him all the encouragement she could.

When Robby finished his conversation about the shows, Elyse asked Betty, "Would you have ever thought I would go into the cattle business? I look at them and then think of all the beautiful clothes I could have bought with that money. How are my men going to like me, in my old gowns for another whole year?"

"Darling, I can assure you right here and now that you shall do very nicely," Robby told her. "It would take more than clothes to keep them away, once you turn those black eyes upon them." Then he laughed, and asked Betty, "Am I not right?"

"Indeed you are!" she agreed. "Besides, you have oodles of

clothes, Elyse. Why don't you bring them over, and let Mom give you a hand at changing some of them? She's a whiz at making something out of nothing."

"That's a wonderful idea, Betts! Ask her, when you go home, if she would have time to give me a couple of days at them. Should really do it before school opens, I guess."

Betty asked Mom that very day, and she said that she would be glad to help Elyse out. By the stack of sewing on her machine, one wondered how she was ever going to wade through it all, but once she got started, she just stayed at her machine until it was finished, and left the housework to Betty and Loretta. Sure enough, by the time school opened in September, she had it all finished.

There would be four of them going to Qu'Appelle to high school this fall. Margie and Johnny started their first year, and Betty and Elyse were finishing their last year. Johnny drove his dad's auto back and forth each day, so they did not use the ponies until the weather finally broke, and the snow started to pile up.

Pat had been able to find a couple of men this fall, shortly before harvest started, and he was thrilled over that. The girls were glad, too, as it left them free to go to school every day.

Loretta had word from Jack; he had been on a furlough to England. While there he took a short trip to Scotland to visit some distant relatives. How she wished he had time enough to come home for a visit, but it was out of all reason to think he could come so far. He wrote he had been slightly wounded, and been in hospital for some time, and that they had granted this furlough before he went back to the front. Each day she prayed the war would hurry and end, so he would not have to go back to that Hell again. But no such luck. However, he was promoted when he returned, and said he spent most of his time in officers' quarters, doing detail work. Somehow she felt he was safer now; at least he would be more comfortable, not having to be out in those cold, wet trenches.

Shortly after school started, Betty rushed into the house one

evening, and called, "Mom! I've just had the most brilliant idea! Would it be possible to have some of the kids in Saturday night? It's been such ages since we had a party."

Mom looked at her excited face, then said, "Why, I guess it would, but how come you're so excited about it?"

"Oh, I'm not really excited, except that I just got the idea coming home, and the more I thought about it the better it seemed, until I could hardly wait to get here to ask you."

"You want to remember parties always mean extra work; but it's all right with me, if you want to do the baking and prepare for it. Then, of course, on Sunday you'll have to clean up the mess," Mom advised.

"We'll do it all, Mom! You won't have to lift a hand," Betty assured her.

At that Mom laughed and said, "I'll just bet I won't! Any time . . . but that doesn't matter, dear, you go right ahead and plan it."

"You're a peach, Mom! Remind me to do something extra special for you one of these days," and she gave Mom a big hug.

"I'll just remember that, my pet! One of these days, when you're not exactly in the mood—as you call it—to, say, scrub the floor or something like that," Mom reminded her.

When Pop was told at supper time, he agreed it was a great idea, then he said, "Guess I better tune up the fiddle, and do a bit of practicing between now and then."

"That's a good idea, Pop," Margie put in, "you know you're getting pretty good on that fiddle."

"Well, if I'm that good, I don't see any need to hire music for the party," he suggested.

"I hadn't planned to anyway, Pop," Betty said, "I just thought between all of us—for nearly all the girls play the piano—we could manage. It's only going to be a get-together, anyway."

"About how many do you think there will be?" Mom asked.

"Oh, about thirty or so, I guess. I'll start telephoning some of them tonight, and the others I can reach at school." So, after dishes were finished, she got on the telephone. By the number of calls, Mary was positive there were going to be more than

thirty, but she didn't say anything about it until Friday evening, then she asked, "Betty, do you know how many are coming to the party tomorrow night?"

Betty looked startled for a minute, then she admitted, "Mom, I hardly know how to tell you, but I've got eighty names on my list now."

"Eighty? Are you crazy, girl? Wherever do you think you are going to put eighty people in this house?"

"I know, Mom, it's an awful lot, but I couldn't seem to find a place to stop inviting, without hurting someone's feelings. I'd ask so and so, and then that meant I had to ask someone else. On and on it went, it seemed. But, Mom, Elyse promised to come early tomorrow to help, then about ten or twelve of the girls insisted they would bring cakes and other dessert, so it really only leaves the sandwiches and coffee to make."

Mom saw she really was worrying about it, so she quickly told her, "Don't worry about it, dear, we'll just squeeze them in somehow." Having known all these youngsters so many years, she knew they'd manage. But she remembered her panic, after that first skating party years ago, and how Anita Stewart had warned her that she would get used to their being underfoot so much. Well, she had, and now she could see how it was much better to have them at home, having their fun, than gallivanting off somewhere by themselves, and perhaps getting into mischief.

And Saturday morning she found herself getting as big a thrill out of the preparations as the girls. Pat, too, enjoyed himself, taking up rugs, and moving the furniture out of the way. Then he brought in boxes and planks, and put them along the walls, so some of them, at least, would be able to sit down.

The party apparently was a real success, for the guests stayed and stayed. It was three in the morning before the last auto pulled out of the yard. Pat and Mary had fun, too, for Betty had included most of the youngsters' parents, which they had not known until the guests started arriving. That had been the reason her party list had grown so long. The two of them agreed that they had a wonderful, thoughtful daughter. Most parents would

have let it go at that, but not Mary and Pat, so before they retired that early morning they both assured her how much they appreciated her including the older folks in the party.

"Oh, skip it, you two!" she exclaimed. "Where would any of us be without our parents?"

"That's nice, dear," Mary said, "but most youngsters don't feel that way. They think older folks are a pain in the neck, and especially they get in the way of the 'necking.'"

"Well, we don't feel that way," Margie put in, "but then again some of the kids have awful cranks for parents. You and Pop never act that way."

"Lord help us if we ever should!" Pat boomed out. "I'd hate to think I'll ever be so old and cranky I can't shake a leg with the best of you."

"Why, you're just an old sheik, that's what you are!" Betty exclaimed. "There, that proves it!" as she hugged him tight, and kissed him. Loretta and Margie piled on him too, and showered kisses on him. A tussle started, and a terrific noise along with it, as he decided to whisker each one thoroughly.

Mary implored them to stop being so inane and silly at this unearthly hour of the morning, so then they turned their attention to her, and Pat helped them out. Such a tussle, as Mary was wiry and strong, but Pat finally pinned her arms behind her back, and she was helpless. Then she pleaded with them that she had enough, and would they please stop. They all had the giggles by this time and, as suddenly as it had started, it stopped, and Pat released his hold on Mary's arms. She informed them, "I've got the craziest family in the world!" and then quietly added, "But the loveliest, too!"

"You're pretty extra-special yourself," Pat offered, and all three girls agreed with him.

A few days after the party, winter set in in earnest again, but it did not seem to bother anyone very much. They did all the things they usually did every other winter; went skating, and to hockey matches; took in the usual round of parties and

dances. Mary and Pat joined a curling team, and they really did enjoy it.

When they went to a party now, it seemed good, as they saw that some of the neighbor boys were already beginning to arrive back from the front, or being released from hospitals. But so many faces were still missing, and many would never come back again; a plain, white cross somewhere in France was all that was left to identify them; except, of course, memories of what wonderful pals they had been.

Book Three

EARLY SUMMER 1924! A beautiful penthouse on Riverside Drive, New York City! First to meet the eye upon entering was an immense foyer, or reception hall, with a winding staircase leading to the second floor. Several doors led off the foyer, and through each could be caught glimpses of luxuriously furnished rooms. The second door to the right led into a comfortable den, with book-lined walls, an inviting fireplace, and cozy, comfortable chairs. A small fire burned in the fireplace, as there was a chilly, drizzly rain outside.

A slender woman of twenty-four or twenty-five was seated in front of the desk. Red-brown curls piled high upon her head accented the features of her face. A wide, white brow; deep blue eyes; tip-tilted nose; full, sensitive lips, and then a firm, set chin and jaw, which was indeed a surprise feature in such a sensitive face. Upon the desk were several packages, each wrapped in lovely paper of either white, blue, or pink, and tied with immense bows of ribbon in contrasting colors. Each package bore the label of one of New York's most exclusive and expensive shops.

But Mrs. Phillip R. Morton, nee Elizabeth Mann, was not particularly interested in the packages at the moment. The lovely blue eyes had a faraway look in them, as she reminisced

about the past few years. However, the packages were in a way responsible, for the cards to be attached were lying on the desk already addressed. One bore the names Mr. and Mrs. John Stewart; and the other Mr. and Mrs. John Carroll, both of the same town: Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Such a long time had elapsed, and so very much had happened. Her mind went back to 1918, and what a full year it had been. Of course June had brought graduation, and with honors, too. Then a chance to join a choral group in Regina for most of the summer. It paid a salary, too, which really had been something.

She remembered the wardrobe that had to be assembled for September, when she had left for Toronto and the Conservatory of Music. How scared she'd been as she started off alone, but how nice everyone had been to her. Several faces passed in front of her now. Mrs. Nora Mitchell, her landlady, had been a perfect second mother to her; Jane Eilers, who shared her room that first year and a half, had decided her Tom at home meant more to her than a musical education, and she'd sped home to his waiting arms. How nearly she had been tempted to do likewise, for then she could still feel Robby's strong arms around her, and the force of his lips upon hers, as he had pleaded with her to stay home and marry him. Then his letters full of his ardent love, each one imploring her to return, and if she would not come right then, please to remain true to him. True to him! How could she have done so, with such people as John Trusdale around? Johnny Trusdale! She smiled to herself as she remembered artistic, talented Johnny, who poured out his soul on his piano, played her accompaniments when she sang publicly, but also made ardent love to her, and swept her off her feet for months. She perhaps would have been silly enough to marry him, if he had ever asked her, but even though he talked like a poet, his heart never ruled his head, and he'd known exactly what he wanted from life; and that life, at least then, had no room for a wife. She recalled his last concert here in New York; now he was on tour playing for the crown heads of Europe.

Johnny had brought up the first barrier between her and

Robby, and their letters became less and less frequent, until finally their correspondence was merely by card, and a few lines for the holidays. She thought of him occasionally, and wondered how he was, but other than mention in Mom's letters she had not heard. Quite recently, though, Mom had written that he was a big man in his particular field, and that he had just returned from a trip to London, where he'd shown his prize animals.

Yes, 1918 had been a full year! Also, it had brought the end of the war on November 11. Such a night as that had been! No one had given a thought about getting home to bed, and when they'd finally come in, Mrs. Mitchell issued her and Jane a fair dressing-down for staying out so late.

Mom and Pop had come to Toronto for her graduation from the Conservatory, and had wanted to take her home with them, but she had felt she should stay in the eastern cities, as they offered more opportunities for light opera, which was what she planned to try for. Then, after some experience, she planned eventually to go on to grand opera.

After Mom and Pop had gone home, she tried to get a part for the summer, but there just had not been any openings in Toronto, for inexperienced singers. Finally she got a lead on something in Windsor, so she spent nearly all her ready cash to make the trip down there. What a small part it had turned out to be, paying scarcely nothing; but she'd decided to take it anyway. Then she had found she could not begin to live on what she made, and it had become imperative that she find some way of making more money. She'd been completely down in the dumps, and feeling most unhappy, as she sat in a café she often frequented, and sipped a cup of tea. Mrs. Watson, the kindly woman who ran it, noticed her despondency, and inquired what was troubling her. The woman had seemed so interested that she had finally explained to her the dire straits she found herself in. The lady then asked her if she had ever waited on tables, and when she had replied in the negative, Mrs. Watson assured her she could learn very quickly, if she could get the job. The job happened to be in a small coffee-shop across the bridge in Detroit. She'd been scared stiff when she went to apply for it

but, wonder of wonders, they had liked her immediately. She had found that the hours would allow her to keep her spot in the show. Things were better after that, as at least she had plenty to eat.

When the show had closed, though, she had not been able to get another part for herself anywhere in Windsor, so she had decided to try Montreal, for she'd heard of the musical shows, and operas there. How she would have loved to have gone on to New York, and try for some of the great shows which were playing there; the *Ziegfeld Follies*, although she'd been certain she didn't have enough beauty for that; or Gershwin's *Scandals of 1921*; *Music Box Revue* had been playing too; also *Shuffle Along*. But she had known she must get some experience behind her before she dared try for anything like that.

She had liked Montreal immediately, and felt perfectly at home among the French Canadians there. It brought back memories of the lovely French families in Qu'Appelle. She had also remembered to be thankful to Marguerite Bordeaux, for the French she had insisted that she learn; this, and the Italian that Signor Tony had shoved down her throat for years, had been one of her biggest bugaboos, but she had been glad they had insisted, for the parts handed to her in Montreal called for use of French in the first one, and Italian in the second. How she had ever become such an overnight sensation in Montreal, she had never been able to figure out. They'd feted her right and left, and it hadn't been long before she had leads, and a bright star adorning her dressing-room door. As she looked back now, she could see she had been a very lucky person, as everything had come her way, and she hadn't had that long, hard struggle for notice which most singers must overcome.

After she had been in Montreal several months, she recalled how she returned to her dressing-room after several encores, and sat thinking of the enthusiastic audience she had just left, when a quick rap upon the door interrupted her thoughts. Nanette, her maid, had quickly crossed the room to open the door. One of the ushers had been there, and he reached out his hand, gave

Nanette a card, then informed her he was to await a reply. When the maid brought the card to her, she had read upon the face of it: "Phillip R. Morton, New York City"; then, turning it over, found written on the back: "You are out of this world! Can you spare me a few minutes? Phillip R."

How sharp and impatient she had been, and how nervy she had thought him. It was the sort of thing she had to contend with every night, it seemed. She'd told Nanette to tell the usher "No," but she remembered how the name would not leave her mind, and she had become so curious about it that the following day at rehearsal she'd spoken to her manager, and inquired if he knew who he was. His eyes had opened wide, and he'd informed her, "Morton is one of New York's biggest producers. Not particularly an artist himself, but a playboy with more money than he knows what to do with, so each year he puts on a big extravaganza." How unhappy she had been over it all, and certain that after her firm rebuttal he would not attempt to reach her again. She thought more than likely he'd already returned to New York. But such had not been the case, for the following night, a whole sheaf of roses arrived with another card, and that time she had not refused, but sent word back that she would give him some time after the final curtain.

As soon as the last curtain was over, she quickly changed from her costume to a beautiful gown, for she had made plans to go on to a party. The maid had just laid out a fur wrap, and placed her jeweled evening bag upon it, when a soft rap upon the door announced someone's arrival. As Nanette opened the door, she had turned from her mirror to bid whoever was there to enter, but she remembered that the words had not come out, for the man who stood there had been by far the handsomest person she had ever seen. Tall—at last six foot two—broad of shoulder, with dark, flashing eyes, and black hair sprinkled with gray at the temples. A man of questionable age, but more than likely near forty.

He apparently had noticed her stare of amazement, for he'd grinned at her, showing perfectly beautiful white teeth, then had

told her, "I know I'm elegant, but don't swoon, fair lady, for then you'll deprive me of your company, and I could not stand that, I assure you."

She had regained control of herself quickly, even if amazed at the arrogance of the handsome creature, and had asked, "You are Mr. Morton?"

"Yes, Miss Mann, and please forgive my very bad entrance." He'd hesitated, stared at her with his bold, black eyes, then added, "You are more beautiful close up than over the foot-lights, if that is possible."

How she had blushed, for flattery still embarrassed her, even though she had received more than her share since she had been in Montreal. However, she had managed to answer quietly, "Thank you, sir."

His eyes traveled around her dressing-room, then back to her, and he had asked, "How about getting out of here, and going somewhere for a late supper, and a quiet talk?"

"I should like to, but I've promised to join some friends who are giving an after-theater party."

"Who are the friends? Maybe I know them; if so, I'm warning you I'm coming along."

She had told him the conductor of the Philomart Orchestra, and his wife, were giving the party.

"Old Kurt Kurtsel, and his lovely wife Minna? Why I've known them for centuries, it seems. I'll just telephone and inform them I'm coming with you."

She could still see him as he reached for the instrument to carry out his decision, and she'd stolen glances at him while he waited for an answer, and had marveled at how handsome he was. When he had his connection, he inquired, "May I speak to Professor Kurtsel? This is Phillip Morton of New York calling." Almost immediately Kurt had answered, and they'd kidded one another for a few minutes, then he handed the telephone to her. Mr. Kurtsel had insisted, "Elizabeth dear, please bring Phillip with you. I did not know until this minute he was in town. Hurry along now, the two of you!"

She had told Kurt, "Yes, we'll be right along, as I'm all ready

to leave." The conversation filtered through her memory, and she could almost see herself as she replaced the receiver on the hook and turned back to Phillip. He had told her then that he really wasn't half as crazy as he appeared, and hoped that she believed him.

"I suppose so, but it's been rather breathtaking, having a stranger come in and take complete command of your evening. However, I do feel better knowing you are a friend of the Kurtseils'," she had answered.

She recalled that as they left the theater, she had found a limousine waiting, and in no time at all they had entered the driveway, then stopped in front of the imposing doorway of the Kurtseils' residence. A large group of people had been assembled, talking, laughing, and thoroughly enjoying themselves. As always, Kurt and Minna were the perfect hosts, and had taken possession of them immediately.

During the evening she had been busy greeting her friends, but she had managed to watch Phillip, too, and he had seemed very well acquainted with all who were present. However, at his first opportunity he had come back beside her again, stood and looked at her intently for several seconds, then had said, "Yes, you are as beautiful as I have heard, and I must tell you before another minute elapses that you have a very lovely voice. It's not much wonder word got through to New York about the little Irish-Canadian with the lovely voice who was taking Montreal by storm."

"Please! You are embarrassing me with such high compliments, and anyway I'm not really Canadian, for I was born in the United States," she had then told him.

"Well, American or Canadian, I really don't care. Just why do you think I am up in this part of the country, especially at this time of the year? It certainly would not be for my health, would it?" he asked her, then had added, "No, my dear, I came purposely to hear you sing, and satisfy myself about you."

"But apparently you are often here, for everyone seems to know you very well."

He'd then told her that he often came to Montreal, but for

that matter, practically all show people knew him, whether in opera, light opera, or just slapstick, and that he had made it his business to know them all. But regardless of that, he'd made this trip especially to see her.

She'd answered, "I suppose I should really feel highly flattered, and I do, but more than likely I have a very poor way of showing it, Mr. Morton."

"Can't you drop the Mister, and just call me Phillip?" he had asked; then he told her, "You know, show people don't usually stand on such formality."

"To call a man Mister after approximately an hour's acquaintance is hardly being too formal, I'd say," she had told him, and rather sharply, too, she recalled.

"Ouch! The kitty has claws, I see! That's good, very good!" and he had laughed as if it were a huge joke; and then he said, "I didn't really mean to be forward; it's more than likely because I want to be on a friendly basis with you that I'm jumping ahead of myself." As she had not answered immediately, he looked at her intently for a few seconds, then said, "Elizabeth is a pretty name, but what do your close friends and your family call you?"

"I've always been Betty to all the family; but most everyone here calls me Elizabeth."

"I like the name Elizabeth, but it's too formal for that pug nose and those freckles; Betty's better, but personally I think I would like the name of Liz for you."

She remembered how she had snapped at him, "Well, like it if you wish, but don't you dare put it into practice. I despise the name of Liz or Lizzie, and it's that sort of name which sticks, if it ever gets started."

Then he had said, "I'll bet there's an Irish temper goes along with those good looks!"

She'd ignored his remark, and turned her attention to a group of friends who stood near. They had immediately included her in their conversation. A deep flush had spread over his face, and she knew now that he had not been accustomed to people ignoring him in such a manner. She also knew now that women as a rule hung upon his every word, until he himself was ready to close the conversation.

After her sharp rebuff, he had left her side, and walked over to where Kurt stood. Weeks later Kurt had related their conversation to her. Kurt told her he had asked Phillip if he was enjoying himself, and he'd replied, "Just fine, old boy! However, I just took a rebuff from your lovely singer."

Kurt told her he had been amazed, and had told him so, and also that they had always found Elizabeth most gracious to everyone.

Phillip had admitted to Kurt that he had more than likely brought it upon himself, as he'd been rather personal upon such short acquaintance, and he had also admitted he thought her very lovely.

Kurt said that he had demanded, "Just what have you got up your sleeve, Phillip? You certainly are not in Montreal for your health in the wintertime."

Phillip had agreed that he was not, but was looking for a star for his new show, therefore was on a scouting trip.

"I thought as much," Kurt said he told him, and had asked, "Does Elizabeth know?"

Morton had answered, "Not unless she's a mind-reader, and please don't tell her, as I'd like to broach the subject in my own way."

Kurt said that he had reminded him to just remember that she was very dear to him and Minna, and that neither one of them would stand for any of his monkey business.

Even though Phillip had assured him he'd use the utmost discretion, Kurt said there had been a devilish gleam in his black eyes as he had turned to walk away from him. Kurt had told her that even Minna had been upset, and as soon as Phillip had left she had come to his side and demanded to know what scheme Phillip had up his sleeve, and he had told her the whole conversation. They had both admitted to one another that it was always a wonderful break to be in one of Phillip's shows, but that so often they had seen the strings attached to those breaks, too.

Days had slipped by, and Phillip had continued to stay in Montreal. Word reached her that he would like to have her for his new show, but she had refused to give any inkling in her

manner that she was terribly excited about it. She remembered that when he had first broached the subject to her she had laughed and said, "Don't be silly, Phillip, I'm not ready for Broadway yet, and especially in a star spot. One just does not take over Broadway, you know, for they usually don't take stars to their hearts overnight. If I have understood it correctly, people must start in the ranks, and build themselves up to the star spots."

He'd then told her, "That's not necessary if Phillip R. Morton sponsors you."

"Maybe not," she had replied, "but its always been my understanding a certain price goes along with such proposals, and I can tell you right here and now that I'll have no part of anything like that."

She remembered the sharp expression which crossed his face, but she had not been too impressed, for almost immediately he'd been his charming self again. There had not been further talk about her joining the show, but he had stayed on, showering her with flowers and gifts. She had been sure that he was without a doubt the most charming man she had ever known.

She remembered now how several nights later Phillip had picked her up and taken her for a late supper. The headwaiter had directed them to a quiet table, taken their order, then left to fulfil it. After the waiter's departure, a silence had fallen between them; then suddenly Phillip had reached across the table, taken her hand in his, and held it for a while. Finally he had said, "Please, Elizabeth, I can't stay here forever! You know I love you very much, so won't you say that you will marry me, and come home with me to New York?"

She had been completely surprised and had looked up quickly with a rather startled expression, but he had just gazed quietly into her eyes, then pleaded, "Please, sweetheart! I've tried but I just cannot seem to leave without your promise at least."

Even though her heart had been thumping, she'd managed to appear not too excited, and had even told him, "I've always been under the impression you weren't the marrying type, Phillip."

"I've always had the same impression, but guess there's a first time for everything," he had told her, then asked, "Aren't you going to tell me you will have me?"

She really had not known the answer to that, and had told him so. But he had been persistent, and asked her to think about it, and would she please try to give him her answer the following day. She had assured him he would have her answer then.

After he'd brought her home, she had not been able to sleep, and a frown creased her brow even now, as she remembered how the questions kept coming up: "Shall I or shall I not? Is it really love when I can't seem to make up my mind?"

Then, the following morning during rehearsal, a package had arrived for her. She recalled her eagerness, but she had managed to wait until she was back in her dressing-room before she had opened it. Utter amazement had been hers as she beheld an immense diamond ring, the center stone completely surrounded with small diamonds. She had never in her life seen such a beautiful ring, much less ever hoped to possess one. Picking up the card which had been enclosed, she had read, "I'll be out front tonight, and if I see the sparkle of my ring upon your finger, I'll know you're mine forever; if not, I shall leave immediately for New York, and it shall be good-bye between us. My heart is yours always! . . . Phillip R."

Her heart had started to pound, and a delightful thrill had surged through her. She had then picked up the telephone, and called his hotel. He had not been in, but she left word for him to come to her apartment immediately he returned. She had just reached home, and had barely finished changing into something comfortable, when the doorbell rang. She had sped down the stairs to answer it herself, and when she had opened the door, she found him standing there tall and handsome. He'd entered without saying anything, and quietly closed the door behind him, then folded her in his arms and whispered, "Beautiful, precious one! I'm so glad you telephoned, as I don't believe I could have waited until tonight." He'd taken her hand in his and looked at the glittering ring upon her finger; then he'd asked, "Do you like it, sweet?"

"Like it? Oh, Phillip, it is simply the most beautiful thing I've ever seen!"

With his arm around her, he'd led her into the living-room, seated himself upon the davenport, and drawn her down beside him. Then he had held her close and asked, "How soon can you close your contract here? We'll be married immediately, then leave for New York!"

"But Phillip, I wouldn't think of walking out on the show before it closes! That's hardly good showmanship, and I'm sure you wouldn't want me to either. Things like that are very hard to live down, and it becomes a sort of blackball against you, as time goes on."

How his body had stiffened, and for a moment a feeling of panic had raced through her. But his voice had been quiet and controlled when he'd replied, "Darling, it's just that I can't seem to see myself separated from you for an instant, but if you must finish your run here, you must, I suppose. However, we'll be married immediately, and then I'll have to be off to New York. I can come up as often as possible, but, the moment you are through here, you must join me in New York."

"I really thought we would wait and be married when I join you there," she recalled suggesting.

He'd answered, "I can't wait that long, my dear!" then pleaded, "Please let's be married immediately!"

"You don't mean right this very day, do you?" she had asked, and stared at him with wide eyes.

He'd laughed at her then, and said, "This very day? Yes, darling, not only this very day, but this very instant!"

"What do I do about a wedding outfit, and so on?"

Instead of answering he had placed his lips upon hers, and closed the questions off. Always when he kissed her like that she felt like a limp rag-doll in his arms. She had not known then, but since had found out, that he used his kisses to win his arguments. A great possessiveness seemed to come over him, and she wondered even now about it. She remembered after that first passionate kiss he released her quickly, and then said, "Hurry up now, and get yourself all prettied up, while I go make the

necessary arrangements. Then I'll pick you up within an hour."

She remembered, too, following him to the door in a sort of trance, and watching him get into his auto; then she had turned and climbed the stairs, but asked herself on the way up: What is this power he seems to have over me? However, she had not dwelt upon it for long; as soon as she entered her room she called to Nanette, and immediately they had become engrossed in what she should wear for her wedding.

The ceremony had not taken long, and afterward Phillip had suggested they return to her apartment; then after the show they could have their wedding breakfast, and in that way invite the cast and friends to help them celebrate. She'd agreed the plan was fine, as it would give her an opportunity to rest for the evening show.

When they reached the apartment, she had been nervous and rather upset. Phillip, noticing her jumpiness, had asked, "What's the matter, darling? You're not afraid of me, are you?" and he had laughed as if he thought it a good joke.

"No," she had answered, "but I'm feeling funny about the whole matter, and especially as I neglected to let Mom and Pop know beforehand. I'm sure they are going to feel hurt they weren't invited. They more than likely would not have been able to come, but I should have wired them before the ceremony, at least."

"I'll send a message along to them when you go to the theater tonight," he had promised, then walking up behind her, had wrapped his arms about her and whispered, "Everyone must wait for Phillip just now; I cannot, and will not wait another instant! Don't freeze up on me, precious!" he had told her, but she had not been able to avoid the taut tremor which passed through her, and he had been sensitive enough to realize it.

"Oh, Phillip, please don't rush me!" she had implored.

"Rush you? My God, woman! Think of all these weeks I've just been holding myself under control! I'll not wait another second!" He had picked her up bodily, and started for the bed, but he had not taken into consideration her years of hard work on the farm. She'd turned upon him like a wild woman, and

hissed, "Take your hands off me this instant! I'll not be mauled like a common fishwife, I'll have you know!" She had kicked and squirmed, and taken him so unawares that he had been glad to release her instantly. He had seen his mistake immediately, and pleaded, "Please, Elizabeth, I forgot myself in my eagerness." He reached for her again, but she had evaded him, and quietly said, "We'll just forget the whole business." She'd moved over to her dressing-table, and wondered where she had heard that intonation in her voice; then a picture of Mom letting Pop have it had come to her mind. She had even been able to see Pop as he stood with a startled expression upon his face. She glanced at Phillip then, and had seen somewhat the same expression, and immediately she had been contrite. She'd giggled and rushed into his arms pleading for him to forgive her abominable temper.

As his arms closed around her again, and his lips searched for hers, he had whispered, "I knew it . . . an Irish spitfire! What fun we're going to have," and she guessed now he'd vowed to himself, even then, he'd break her of that soon enough.

She recalled how, after their fuss, she lay beside him upon the bed, and wondered how she had managed so many years without him, for it seemed he had everything to offer a woman; but in the back of her mind there had been that uneasy feeling about the way he seemed to be able to take complete control of her, sapping very ounce of strength from her body, and leaving her with such a helpless feeling. She'd decided then it would settle into everyday living, when the strangeness had worn off.

Almost immediately after that Phillip had returned to New York, and although he'd made many trips back and forth, the winter had seemed long. Finally the show had closed in Montreal, and it prepared to leave for the road. The lovely girl who had understudied her all winter took her place in the summer roadshow.

She reminisced now over the great round of farewell parties given for her. Finally she simply had to call a halt, and soon after had left for New York. Nanette had not been able to go with her, and she had been certain she would never find her

equal, but Nanette simply had to stay in Montreal with her Pierre and their two lovely children.

Through her musings she saw herself on the train to New York. She recalled how the conductor had come to tell her they were pulling into Grand Central. How she had taken a mirror from her purse to inspect her make-up, and arrange the few curls which peeped from under a close-fitting, brown hat, on which posed a perky feather. The material and workmanship of her lovely brown suit had been in the very best of taste, and the latest style. On the seat beside her, she recalled, lay a beautiful stole of mink, a gift from Phillip soon after their marriage, also her handbag, gloves, and jewel case.

The train had scarcely stopped before she had heard Phillip's voice as he inquired which was her compartment, and then she had been in his arms. He'd held her away from him for an instant and stared at her; then, as he'd seen tears in her eyes, he'd asked, "Why, darling, whatever is the matter? Aren't you happy to be finally here in New York, and home?"

She'd told him, "They're tears of happiness, I guess, Phillip. I thought I'd never get here, and you have spoiled me so, I've been so lonesome up there all by myself."

"Well, you needn't ever be lonesome again, darling. We'll go to the apartment for a few days, and then I've planned a party aboard our boat, so you can meet a few necessary people; then back home again, and it will be time to go into rehearsal for fall. How does that sound?"

"You mean to say we own an honest-to-goodness boat? One that travels on the ocean?" she had exclaimed, then added, "I'll never be able to stand it all! New York! . . . A role in a new show! . . . A boat, or I suppose you call them yachts! . . . And then of course our apartment. I'm dying to see that, too, and you've been awful stingy describing it in your letters—why?"

"Surprise, my dear," he had answered, "but come along and we'll visit it immediately." Before he handed her into the limousine, he had said to the chauffeur, "This is Mrs. Morton, your new mistress; and Elizabeth, I'm sure you are going to enjoy

West, who is chauffeur and handyman around the house. His wife Carrie does the cooking, and their daughter Ruby takes care of the apartment."

A wide grin had spread over West's black face, and he'd said, "Welcome to New York, Mis' Morton! Hope you're goin' enjoy this big town!"

"Thank you West, I'm certain I'm going to love it!" she had managed to reply, but she remembered how taken aback she had been at the sight of the big, black fellow. At that time she had never spoken to one before in her whole life. She had seen them on trains as porters, but that was all, and she had only thought of them as a very cheerful, simple people. But to have her home run by them had seemed another thing altogether. She had not said anything at the time, but she recalled how she fully intended to staff her home with white help at the first opportunity.

She had been all eyes as she stared out the car window at the immense skyscrapers which made up the New York skyline. She would never have believed, even in her wildest dreams, that they would be so tall. She had turned to Phillip, and asked, "Broadway? Which is Broadway?"

"I purposely asked West to miss it, as I want you to see it the very first time at night, when it has all its finery on," he had told her.

When she had asked what street they were on then, he'd told her, "This is Riverside Drive, and right ahead of us is the building our apartment is in." Then West swung the automobile in front of an imposing entrance, and a liveried doorman had come forward to open the auto door for them.

From that moment on she had been beyond speech. The immense foyer, with its beautiful furniture, and rugs, which made her feel as if she treaded on a magic carpet. The quiet dignity of it all, and then the apartment—it had left her breathless! She'd decided it would take days to explore it all, and had wondered if it would ever feel like home amid so much elegance and splendor.

Ruby and Carrie had met them at the door, and both colored women had bade her welcome. Carrie had even told her how pretty she was, and she'd decided to herself: They are certainly friendly people, and have nice manners too; then she had followed them and her bags upstairs.

She could almost hear Phillip's call after her, "I'll give you exactly fifteen minutes, then I'm coming in, even if I have to break the door down." She had leaned over the banister, and for answer had stuck her tongue out at him.

True to his word, exactly fifteen minutes later he had rapped upon her door. Ruby opened it, and then had stood aside for him to enter. He'd told the maid that they would not need her any more for the present, and should Mrs. Morton want her later, they would call her.

"Yes, sir," the maid had quietly answered, and closed the door behind her. She recalled that as the maid left she had turned from the window and said, "Phillip, there is the most perfect view from this window, and I'm going to love it."

He had come up close behind her, put his arms around her, and whispered, "Just who is interested in the view? Turn around here and let me look at you!" He'd held her at arm's length, and his eyes had run over her from head to foot. "If you knew how lovely you look, standing there in that late afternoon sunlight; the filmy, white negligée you have on is beautiful, and the light is just right; as it strikes you it outlines all the lovely curves of your beautiful body." He had continued to feast his eyes upon her for a minute, then with a half-moan had drawn her into his arms again and whispered, "Are you glad to be home?"

With her head nestled close to his heart, she had answered, "Oh, Phillip, I never dreamed anything so beautiful! Why do you do all of this for me?"

"Because I knew the moment I saw you I should never be able to live without you," he'd whispered back. His hands had caressed her body, then with one hand he had pushed her head back and found her lips in a long kiss. She could remember even

now how her body melted against his, and how he had lifted her gently and placed her upon the bed; then, reclining beside her, he'd asked, "This is really our marriage bed, isn't it?"

She had nodded her head against his shoulder, afraid to trust her voice to speak aloud; and to herself she'd wondered if she would ever be able to speak again, for that feeling as if she were in a trance had taken possession of her again. One minute burned by a thousand fevers, the next numb like a thousand deaths! Had it been wonderful or had it been awful? She had not known, but thought maybe some day, when the newness had worn off, she would be able to tell; right then she had not been able to do so and, what was more, had not wanted to.

Yes, that first year in New York had been wonderful. The people, important people in show business; the trips on their yacht; the rehearsals for the new show, with its beautiful, lovely songs; the leading man of the show, who had a rich baritone voice, and the best part of it all was that they'd gotten along splendidly; the opening of the show; the kind press notices! Yes, it had been a wonderful year! She had been tired, oh, so tired, and had often wondered how she would ever sing another song. When she had felt that way was when she had seen the true side of Phillip. To herself, whenever she had time to think of it, she'd likened him to a slavedriver. He'd been like a man possessed, whenever she had shown any sign of being tired.

When the next spring came, she had planned a nice, long rest for herself, and a trip home to see Mom and Pop and the family. She had wanted so terribly to see them all again, and have Phillip meet them, too, but he had informed her it was out of all reason, as she had to start rehearsal immediately for the fall show, and had told her, "I put a second-rate star in your part for the road show, just especially so you could be here to give your full time to the new show, and now you do nothing but blabber about a trip home!"

She should have known by then that she always lost those arguments, but nevertheless she had told him, "But Phillip, I'm so lonesome to see my people, and I can scarcely ask them to come all the way here."

He had looked at her quickly, then answered sharply, "Well,

don't even suggest such a thing to them, or they might take a notion to come here, and there will be no time at all for entertaining."

Such a queer feeling had passed over her, and she remembered asking herself, Could it be possible he'd deprive me of seeing my own family? Near-panic possessed her even now when she thought of it. However, she had managed to keep her voice calm as she told him, "Phillip, I don't think I can take another summer of rehearsal here in New York, in the terrible heat. Couldn't we at least manage to rehearse somewhere else?"

"Don't be silly, you know I've arranged for a series of lessons with Professor Wolden for the summer," he'd told her in a very overbearing way.

How burned she had been, and she'd answered heatedly, "You've arranged! Where do I come in? Gosh damn it, Phillip, I'm getting sick and tired of your arrangements!"

"Watch your language, Liz! You'll get in the habit of talking that way, and I'm certain your public would not approve," he'd said sarcastically.

Then she had really shouted, "My public my eye! *Your* public you mean! And don't you dare call me Liz again! You know that I told you I will not be called by that name. I don't like it, and if you persist, I might really cuss. Pop has a pretty choice vocabulary along that line, and I'm quite sure I can recall a few very good ones for my own use." With that she had flounced out of the room, and had no sooner banged her own door closed than Ruby quietly entered and started to busy herself.

"That will be all Ruby, I wish to be alone for a while," she had snapped at the maid. As the colored girl left, she had thought: Even the damn help spy on me. I'm fed up with it! But what could she have done about it? she wondered now, for her whole future had been wrapped up in Phillip and the theater. How she had wanted to take time off to go home; also start raising her family. She still felt the sting of Phillip's voice, the first time she had questioned him regarding their family. He had said, "Pray, what do you think your public will be doing, while you've taken time off to have a brat?" Then he had laughed as though it was a huge joke.

Like a good girl, she had stayed in town and worked hard for the new show, but how exhausted she had been by the time it was ready to open; and she had wondered how she would be able to carry through the season. There had been such especially strong competition as the Duncan Sisters in *Topsy and Eva*. Everyone had been humming their song "Remembering" that season; there had also been Gershwin's *Little Miss Bluebird*, with its hit song "Who'll Buy My Violets"; and the Charleston swept the country that year, taking it by storm. It had come from Johnson's "Runnin' Wild."

Regardless of how depressed she had felt, the show had been good, and though the notices hadn't been so fluent and flattering as before, they had been very kind. As week after week dragged along, she had felt the first strain between herself and Phillip, and she'd been conscious of some secrecy, for often when she joined a group of people at some function, the conversation immediately stopped, and there had been that same strain until she moved on again. Then one day she had been reading a theatrical sheet, and chanced upon an item which attracted her attention. It had read, "Could a luscious blonde be new star material? One of our big producers seems to think so."

She had known immediately, from some inner sense, that the producer in question had been Phillip. That explained why he had been away from home so often. What should she have done about it? Nothing, she had decided, and what was more, she had not wanted to do anything. Even now she wondered who the luscious blonde was, and she had not been able to find out to date.

The previous night they had returned home from attending an after-theater affair, and as they prepared to retire she had casually asked, "Have you decided what your new show is going to be, Phillip? I haven't heard you mention anything, which is rather unusual, as generally you have a dozen ideas by this time of the season."

"No, I haven't decided," he'd answered rather brusquely, then had lapsed into silence.

"Maybe this year there will be time for me to make a flying trip home," she had suggested.

He had looked at her for a few seconds, then had laughed and said, "Yes, there'll be plenty of time. You've finally won your point, Liz."

Yes, that had been last night, and today she was seated in front of her desk, on which were arrayed the many packages. She shook her head to bring herself back to the present, and found Ruby standing at her elbow. She said, "Please, Miss Elizabeth, it's time to dress for the theater."

"Yes, Ruby, I'll be right with you. I'll finish these parcels." She picked up the cards and stared at them. Mr. and Mrs. John Stewart. Imagine Margie a mother! Margie and Johnny grown up, and married for over a year. It just didn't seem possible. A lovely, bouncing baby boy, Mom had written. And this was Jack's and Loretta's third baby. Two boys, and now a wee girl. Aunt Betty four times, and I haven't seen any of them; but, she thought, I will soon!

There was some plan forming in the back of her mind, but she could not see it straight yet, for she still felt numb all over from the shock of Phillip's words last night.

She finally finished the packages, then went to her room where Ruby had her clothes laid out, and the maid waited patiently for her. There was silence as she slipped out of her negligée, and prepared for her bath. Then Ruby asked finally, "You goin' to be able to sing tonight, Miss Betty? You've sat all day at that desk! Ma and I looked in several times, but you had such a wrapped-up expression on your face, we was scared to bother you; but, finally I just had to, as it was getting late. Ma's got a tray fixed, and I'm goin' to run down and fetch it."

"Never mind, Ruby, as I'm not the least bit hungry, and it's getting late, and you know I never eat right before I sing."

"I'm fetchin' it anyhow, as you got to have some warm tea at least," she answered, and disappeared through the door.

The tea did help, and she thanked Ruby for suggesting it. "You're a good girl, Ruby, and I'm going to miss you an awful lot."

"Miss me? Where you goin' I can't go, too?" she asked.

"I really don't know, to tell the truth," she confessed, "but I'm certain I won't need a maid wherever it is." Ruby made a

funny noise and mumbled something under her breath about men . . . men!

After first curtain, Phillip came to her dressing-room to upbraid her about the listless way she was putting her songs over. She looked at him, and saw that gleam in his eyes which she had caught fleeting glimpses of many times before. Those black eyes spoke volumes, and of herself she asked: How could I have been such a fool! He's been using me all this time to further his own purposes; to make money and more money, so he could startle this town with a new extravaganza. Hateful beast! That's what he is! Then aloud she yelled, "Leave my dressing-room this instant! Don't you dare come in here again, unless I tell you that you may do so!"

"Liz, lower your voice," he told her in an overbearing way, then added, "Remember you're not out on the Saskatchewan prairie, with Indians next door, but in New York among civilized people."

"New York! Civilization!" she screamed, "You can take your dang-blasted city, and its shows, and everything that goes with it! How did I ever get mixed up with the likes of you, I'll never know. I used to give myself credit for a few brains, but evidently I've mislaid them somewhere, or else I'd have seen through your game. Oh, yes, it was very fine! Yachts! Jewels! Kisses! Even marriage to gain your end! I can see everything very clearly now, but—" she didn't get any farther, for Phillip started toward her and said, "Please, Betty! Come down to earth, and cut out the yelling!" He was scared now as he saw she really was mad. Maybe she'd walk out before time for the show to close, then where would he be? He reached to take her in his arms, certain that once he held her he could sway her to his way again. She backed away from him, and finally she came in contact with her dressing-table; as she put her hand behind her to steady herself, she felt the hairbrush under her hand. She lifted it, and hissed, "One step farther, you . . . you pimp—for that's what you really are, living off my work—and I'll lay your head open with this!" He stopped in his tracks, for he knew she was mad enough to do it. He looked at her closely for a few seconds, then shrugged his shoulders, turned on his heel, and left the room.

When the door closed behind him, she found herself trembling all over. How would she ever finish the show? Then she knew what she was going to do. She was going to leave him, leave New York! Yes, yes, that was it! One thought tumbled over the other, as plans formed in her mind. A rap on the door brought her back to the present, and a voice said, "Second curtain, Miss Mann! One minute; second curtain!"

She quickly repaired her make-up, then left for the wings to wait her entrance, as the male lead and chorus opened this sequence of the play. Her heart was singing again, now that she knew what she was going to do.

And she sang as she never had before, lifting her voice in pure joy, it seemed, casting the load from her heart with each note. The audience sat enthralled, and Phillip stood in the wings surprised and amazed. He had never heard her sing like that, and he could not understand it, as he had just left her, and she had been in a screaming rage. She was wonderful, there was no doubt of that, and he had been a fool even to consider anyone else for his new show. He must make amends, and quickly too, before she decided to join another show; and she would get offers galore after such a performance.

Her dressing-room door was locked after final curtain; and later at home her bedroom door was locked also, and all the pleas he could offer brought not even one word in reply. However, she knew she would have to talk to him, but decided it would be only in her attorney's office. There were just ten days left until the show closed for the summer, and she would see the show through to the end; but immediately it closed she had made up her mind that she was leaving for Reno.

Ruby brought the morning papers with her coffee. Every reporter had outdone himself, it seemed. It was a wonderful feeling to know that she was really in, but right now nothing was as important as getting a divorce, and a nice long rest at home with Mom, Pop, and the family; then and only then would she consider another show.

After that first meeting at the attorney's, Phillip was beside himself. He pleaded; he stormed; he raved, but nothing he said had any effect upon her. She treated him just exactly as if he

did not exist. There was just one point she was very explicit about, and that was to see that she got every penny coming to her. She could tell it was a dreadful ordeal for him to part with any of the fortune he had amassed through her efforts, but her attorneys knew their business, and finally a settlement was agreed upon which was satisfactory to her.

Her six weeks' residence at Reno gave her plenty of time to look back over the past six years. Could it be possible she had not been home for six years? There would be great changes, she knew, but she hoped not too many.

At last the whole ordeal was over, and she had her divorce. She bought herself a light coupé, and decided to drive home, instead of taking the roundabout train-trip. Her heart sang as she sped north, closer and closer home. She was across the line finally, and when she hit Weyburn she knew she would be home in time for supper that night. Then Regina loomed into sight, and she stopped just long enough to fortify herself with a cup of tea. Just forty odd miles now until she was home. Home! Oh, wonderful thought!

Dear and familiar sights started to cross her vision. Ah! . . . the steeple of the Catholic Church, and the flagpole atop the high school! She slowed down as she came into town. Qu'Appelle . . . what memories it brought up, but the town was practically the same. A new store front; here and there a new coat of paint; a couple of new names over the doorways, but generally it was the same. She did not stop, but kept going past the business section. Oh! There's Stan and Kitty Carroll's house! She should stop, but no, later she would have time to see them all. Right now she could think of nothing but getting out to the farm. North out the main highway, which had been graveled since she left. A turn to the left, one to the right; the light car bumped along the dirt road, the fenders brushed against the tall grass and clover which grew in abundance along the roadside. A sweet grassy odor invaded the car, and she drew in a long slow breath. Her eyes wandered over the fields; to her right the Stewart farm; the coulee bridge; another swing to the right, and she was on the narrow road which wound its way beside the coulee to the

house. That last curve, and the buildings set in their hollow, loomed up before her eyes.

Some changes met her quick glance. A larger garage; a new machine-shop; and there, near the south bluff, Jack's and Loretta's new house, which Mom had written her about in detail.

A warning bark . . . again that bundle of yellow and white fur, not as agile as of yore, but still full of pep, bounding toward the car. "Trusty! Old faithful fellow!" she called to him through the car window. He cocked his head to one side, then started to half-whimper, half-bark, as her voice struck some inner cord of his memory.

Before she could stop the car, he was on his hind legs, trying to reach her through the window, and making a fine mess of the car's paint job. She set the brake, ready to get out and open the gate, when Pop's head emerged around the corner of the porch. He whooped like an Indian, and in a loud booming voice announced her arrival to the folks in the house.

"Hello, colleen darlin'!" he called as he loped toward the gate. "I figured that old Scotch mutt, wasn't making all that racket for nothing." When he got the gate open he waved her through, and she eased the car into the yard. By this time Mom and Janet were outside waiting, and fairly jumping up and down with happiness. Mom embraced her, then Janet, and finally she was in Pop's arms. There were tears in everyone's eyes, and she gazed from one to the other. Mom had a few silver threads in her black hair; Janet was a big girl for twelve, and at that awkward age, but there was possibility of great beauty; Pop was big and burly as ever, but his black curls were now a steel-gray cap hugging his head. Her eyes spied a little boy of perhaps five staring at her with wide, blue eyes. She was just ready to ask who he was, when Mom said, "This is Larry, Loretta's and Jack's eldest. Larry, darling, this is your Aunt Betty! Now run and tell Mommy and Daddy she's here, will you? Come on in the house, all of you! I'll bet my supper is burnt by now, as I was just ready to take it up."

"Anything you want me to bring in from the car, Betty?" Pop asked.

"Not right now, Pop, we can bring it in later."

They were scarcely inside when Jack and Loretta burst in upon them, with their three youngsters. Such a hugging and kissing as there was, and Betty and Loretta had a good cry on one another's shoulders.

"Here, let me look at my nephews and the wee niece!" She looked at Larry and said, "I met you, young fellow, and I must say you're a fine chap! He looks like you, Jack. Have you got a kiss for Aunt Betty?"

"Naw! I don't kiss any women except Mommy and Grandma," he answered her, very rough and tough.

"Larry! What kind of a way is that to act? You give your Aunty Betty a kiss this instant!" his mother snapped at him.

Reluctantly he did as he was told. All the while little Tommy was edging up to her. After she kissed Larry, she looked at him and said, "You've got a kiss for me, haven't you?"

He nodded his head yes, then dashed at her, wound his tiny arms around her neck, and informed her, "I like you!"

"You precious thing!" she exclaimed, as she returned his embrace. He was like a small cherub, all blond curls and big blue eyes.

"That's pretty unusual," Jack put in. "He's mighty reticent with his love, but you've made an instant hit, kid!"

"Kid indeed! That's as nice a compliment as I've had in ages, Jack! But now, let me see this little new girl!"

Mom had taken the baby from Loretta's arms as they entered. Betty stood and gazed at the sleeping infant. "She's like a wee angel!" she exclaimed. "You never did write and tell me what you decided to name her. Surely she has a name, now that she's three months old."

Loretta laughed and said, "Yes, she's got a name all right, but a lot of good it does her. Her real name is Loretta Marie, but Pop named her Fairy, and she doesn't get anything else. Maybe some day, when she's older, freckled, and minus her baby teeth, she may get Marie then."

"Fairy? How appropriate!" Betty answered, then held out

her arms to the baby and said, "Here, Mom, let me take her."

"Fine, dear, as I better take a squint at this food." Then she turned to Loretta and asked, "You kids eat yet?"

"I was just taking it up, so I shoved it at the two men, told them to help themselves, and we came on the run."

"Well, you'll eat here now," Mom told her. "I'll just add some more, is all. There will be plenty," Mom added, as she saw that Loretta was ready to refuse.

"Have Margie and Johnny got a telephone?" Betty asked them.

"Yes, they have," Pop answered. "Lordy! I guess I better call them right away." He went to the phone, listened to see if it was busy, then turned the crank, three longs and two shorts. "Margie?" he yelled into the instrument. "Can you come over?" Margie must have asked why, for he answered, "You should know why, without being told!" Silence again, then he replied, "Yes, she's here, just got in!" Another short silence, then Pat's voice boomed out, "Yes, she's home, you blasted rubbernecks! I can hear your receivers clicking all along the line! But you all just wait a couple of days before you come calling, let her get settled first! You there, Margie? Darn busybodies! All right, we'll see you in a little while." He hung up the receiver and prepared to explode upon those assembled, when Mom's voice interrupted, "Patrick Mann! What in Heaven's name are you trying to do? Make enemies of all our neighbors? Such a way to talk!"

"Well, these damn rural phones drive you nuts!" he answered. "Every one of the twelve subscribers had their ears cocked listening!"

"You can't blame them," Mom put in, "they all know that Betty was expected, and naturally they are curious. I'd perhaps do likewise."

"Yes, I guess you would. Sometimes I wonder how you womenfolk manage to get your work done, when you have to spend so much time rubbering on the telephone."

Betty was doubled up with laughter, and when they looked

at her with a question on their faces, she said, "Oh, gosh, but it sounds natural to hear you two barking at one another! You haven't changed a bit, either one of you."

Mary and Pat glanced at one another, then joined in the laughter too, for as usual their word-battles were over as quickly as they started.

Loretta and Janet had been busy setting extra plates at the table, and now all was ready, so everyone sat down. Pat looked around the table, then said, "We'll have a silent prayer tonight; each one offer his own, but I imagine they'll all be somewhat alike, eh?" He bowed his head for a few seconds, then said, "Amen."

Then everyone started talking at once. Questions flew right and left. They were still at the table lingering over their coffee, when Trusty's bark broke in upon them. Janet jumped up and went to look out the window. "It's Marge, Johnny, and the baby," she informed them. "Oh, yes, Robby's with them too!"

The greetings started all over again. Margie and Betty flew into each other's arms. After much hugging and kissing, amid tears and laughter, Betty held her back at arm's length and said, "Little Margie! It doesn't seem possible! Let's see, you were fifteen the last time I saw you, and now you're a grown woman, married and already a mother." Margie had become a very beautiful woman, tall and slender, built like Mom.

Johnny spoke up then, and demanded, "What am I? . . . the orphan brother-in-law or something?"

"Oh, Johnny dear, I'm so sorry, but it seemed I couldn't take my eyes off this Sis of mine, she's become that pretty!" She threw her arms around his neck and kissed him heartily. Then she turned to Robby, and extended her hand in greeting, but he said, "Oh, no you don't! I better rate a kiss of welcome, too!"

She laughed and turned her face up to be kissed, but she was not ready for the quick thrill which enveloped her as his lips met hers. She quickly stepped back and demanded, "Now where is my nephew? I must see him instantly!"

Loretta had taken the baby from Margie's arms when they came in, and she had removed his bonnet and blanket. Betty

took him from her, and seated herself in Mom's low rocker. She just sat and stared at him. Finally Margie asked, "Well, say something! Don't tell me he's such a freak you're speechless!"

"Margie! What a thing to say! Of course he's not a freak, he's beautiful." The baby was still asleep; not even all the hullabaloo they had raised in their greetings had disturbed him. Then Betty added, "Look at those eyelashes, will you? What some girl wouldn't give for those." Everyone watched her with the baby, which she handled with perfect ease, as if she had a half dozen of her own. "Mom wrote me you named him Robert Patrick. What does he get every day, Robby or Paddy?"

"Neither," Margie offered. "For the present he's Bobby-Pat, but he'll perhaps disapprove of that when he's older; then I imagine the one that suits his personality the best will stick for everyday use."

"That's nice! I like it very much," she agreed, and her eyes danced first at Pat and then at Robby. "'Specially as he's named after my two favorite men!"

Robby had been quiet all this time, just sitting watching the play of emotions over Betty's face, but he spoke up now, and directing his conversation toward Pat said, "I don't know how well you've fared these past years, but personally I can't see where I've been much of a favorite, can you?"

Betty's eyes dropped, and a slow flush spread over her face. Everyone was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop, but finally Pat came to the rescue and said, "I'd hardly say that, Robby, more than likely . . ." but Betty interrupted and said, "That's all right, Pop, you don't have to crawfish for me." Then she turned her lovely eyes toward Robby and continued, "I perhaps deserved that, Robby, for I've been very careless about writing you, and so on, but please let's not quarrel my very first night home."

It was Robby's turn to flush, and he said, "Please forgive me, my dear! That showed what a nasty, jealous streak I have in my make-up, doesn't it?" Then he looked at them all and said, "I'm sorry, everyone!" and he lapsed into silence again.

Betty settled quickly into the quiet everyday living on the farm. Friends and neighbors came calling; some out of real friendship, others out of curiosity, to see if she were changed now that she was a prominent star of the Broadway theater.

Long hours were spent just talking and talking with Mom and Janet, or with Loretta or Margie. Elyse and Don came out from town to visit, the first few days she was home. Yes, Elyse had finally married Don, and he was doing very well. He was Territory Manager of a well-known firm which handled farm implements, so consequently he traveled a great deal. Elyse had more time on her hands than she knew what to do with, so after Betty got home she spent days on end visiting there. She and Betty quickly slipped into their old, close friendship, and she seemed the only one Betty could be completely frank with about the trying ordeal she had gone through with Phillip. Elyse thrilled to all her stories of the glitter and glamor of the theater. Betty thought to herself: She would have thrived on it; why wasn't my make-up more like hers? Then more than likely I would still be there. Elyse never tired of looking at, and trying on, the beautiful clothes she had brought home.

Three weeks slipped by, on flying wings, it seemed! Three quiet, lovely weeks! Doing nothing but just what she felt like doing; mostly just being lazy. There was not so much for Mom and Pop to do any more, for when Jack returned from the war front he took over all the heavy work. Then, after he and Loretta were married, she relieved Mom of the feeding and housing of the hired help, one of the biggest items on a large farm. A couple of years after that, Jack wanted to add more land, which he and Pop would farm on a share basis. Pat thought it over, and he and Mary talked it pro and con carefully, then decided it would take a great deal of worry and heavy work off his shoulders. So they had acquired another section to the west. This arrangement had been in operation ever since, and was more than satisfactory to all.

The yard was full of all sorts of modern equipment. Another tractor had been added; a large motor-truck; a combine,

which cut and threshed the wheat all at one time. There was a car for Mom, Pop and Janet; another for Loretta and Jack; and there was a light pickup truck. The yard and buildings had electric lights, as well as the house.

When Betty made her rounds of the stables, she found not nearly so many horses as of yore. There were all sorts of improvements, too. She stood and looked in amazement the first time she watched the milking-machine in operation. Too, she saw Robby's influence in the fine herd of cattle. No more mixed breeding, apparently.

Pop had kept her little Indian pinto, and she was more than thrilled when Ponto gave indications that he remembered her. She promised herself a gallop soon.

• So early one morning she decided she would take him out and go to Margie's for a gabfest. Although they had been to Mom's many times since she arrived home, she had not been to visit them yet. Margie told her that Robby had two full sections of land, on which he raised feed and also pastured his beautiful purebred herds. He and Johnny worked the place together, Margie and Johnny taking the profit from the grain and he the profit from his stock. Margie admitted they were not making much, but it did all right as a start, and maybe after this year they would be in a good-enough financial position to buy their own place.

Betty hardly recognized the old place, which Robby had bought several years ago. As she remembered it, it had been badly run down and in need of repairs. Robby had torn down practically all the buildings and replaced them with new ones. Almost as far as the eye could see were white corral-fences.

The same house stood, but had been remodeled a great deal. Margie had furnished it nicely, and they seemed quite comfortable, Betty decided, as Margie showed her through the house. She had taken one bedroom and made it into a nursery for Bobby-Pat; then there was a bedroom for her and Johnny, and one for Robby.

Johnny and Robby were both happy to see her when they

came in for dinner, and Robby exacted a promise from her that she would let him show her around the place when they finished eating.

Later, when they left the house together, Robby suggested they take their ponies, as it was quite a jaunt to try on foot. First, though, he showed her around the corrals; there were those holding his prize bulls; some with young beef steers being prepared for market. Betty followed him in silence, and listened to his explanations. She had never dreamed he had expanded his stockraising to such proportions. Finally they left for the fields, to look at the great herds he had grazing there. They were mostly cows, with their young following at their heels. However, some fields had only young heifers; others young bulls, and a couple of these were trying out their prowess, bunting one another all over the place. Robby explained that soon they would have to be separated, as often they fought until one killed the other.

As they rode back into the yard, Robby said, "Seems mighty natural to see you there on Ponto. Brings a heap of memories surging up."

"Yes, I think I feel more like myself today than any time since I got home. Guess it was feeling Ponto under me again," she answered him.

When they dismounted, Robby asked, "Would you care to glance over a few of my blue ribbons?"

"I would like to very much. Mom wrote me you were practically world champion in your field."

He led the way to a small, square building which stood off by itself, opened the door, and they entered. Betty found herself in a sort of den, with bookshelves holding all sorts of books on animal husbandry, and a desk and several deep, leather chairs. One whole wall was covered with blue, red, and yellow ribbons, which he explained he had taken in Canada, the United States, England, and Scotland. There were scores of pictures of his prizewinning animals hanging on another wall.

After he showed her around, and explained each detail, he asked, "Won't you sit for a while, Betty?" They seated themselves

in the deep, leather chairs, and a silence fell between them, but it was a comfortable silence, which Betty finally broke. "I'll bet you spend a great deal of time in this room, don't you?"

"Lots of time, Betty," he quietly answered. "Many times I've pictured you sitting there in that very chair. Funny it should be the one you chose to sit in."

"Well, it looked so darn comfortable, I couldn't resist it!" She leaned her head against the back and closed her eyes. "Gosh, it's sure a good feeling to be relaxed once again!" And a soft sigh escaped through her parted lips.

Another silence was broken only by Robby as he filled a pipe, then lit it. He sat and looked at her for a long while, then remarked, "I remembered you as very pretty, Betty, but you've grown into a beautiful woman." Then before she could answer, he went on, "Elyse reminded me the other day of something I said to her, after that first party at our house. Remember how you got so angry at me for wanting to kiss you that night?" And he laughed as he remembered, and a smile spread over her lips. "Well, as I was saying, Elyse reminded me of something I said to her that night. When we went upstairs to bed, I went in her room for our nightly chat, and I asked her then if she could visualize what a beautiful woman you were going to be. Seems I had more sense then than I had later on when I grew up."

Still there was no reply from Betty, so he continued, "You look ever so much better already; you had a strained nervous tension about you when you first came home, but now you're becoming more self-assured every day."

"But I feel a long way from that, Robby. I sometimes wonder if I shall ever be my carefree self again."

"Would you actually want to be carefree, Betty? I don't think any of us can be as we grow older, for then we have everyday obligations to meet. Seems if one were actually carefree he would also be pretty shallow," and he waited her answer.

"I guess I used the wrong word, for I didn't really mean it the way it sounded. What I really mean, I guess, is to be able to view things from a lighter side, and especially to be able to find some laughs again. Seems it's been ages since I was able to

have a good laugh over something silly, and I've hated myself for that."

"That will come again, my dear, for it is not your natural disposition to be otherwise. One thing I always loved you for was your quick wit, even if it was flavored with temper occasionally, and your readiness to be able to see the funny side of everything. You had such a knack of being happy, like the mornings you'd come riding along on Ponto, singing like a lark, and no matter what a morose frame of mind I might be in it disappeared like magic as soon as you made your appearance."

"Those were good days, Rob! One doesn't know how good until there aren't any more of them."

He didn't answer right away; just sat and watched her. She still leaned her head against the back of the great chair, eyes closed, relaxed. Finally he asked, "You've been hurt a good deal, haven't you, Princess? Makes me so mad I'm ready to put on my fighting clothes, each time I think of it."

"That's not your fault, Robby, just mine, for not paying special attention to where I was going."

"But I never should have let you out of my sight, I guess. Maybe then it would have been different," he suggested.

"I doubt you could have stopped me, Robby." She hesitated, then added, "It wasn't all bad, of course; there were the good parts, too."

"There's no use my pretending I don't know," he admitted. "What I couldn't guess, Elyse has told me about. I hope you don't mind, my dear."

"No, I don't mind," she answered in a listless way; then she straightened up and added, "I have to be getting on my way now. I want to stop and chat with Margie for a while." She put her words into effect, and started for the door. "Thanks for showing me around, Robby."

"No thanks needed, Princess; you know that without me telling you." He walked in front of her, then placed a hand on each shoulder; she glanced up with a startled expression on her face, but he quietly said, "No, my dear, I won't rush you, although I

thought for a minute I might kiss you; but you take your time." Then he laughed to himself.

A flush spread over her face and, stepping back from him, she demanded, "And what's so darn funny?"

Then he really did laugh, but when he saw her eyes snapping fire, he said, "Oh, good! Very, very good! To see you show some spunk makes it like old times. But, darling, I wasn't laughing at you. I was just thinking about the waiting part, and suddenly it seemed funny, for actually that's one of the things I've done best all these years."

"Poor Rob! I'm so sorry!" Then she walked close to him, reached high on tiptoe, and planted a light kiss upon his lips. His arms closed around her quickly, but she pushed him back and said, "Please, Robby! I'm not ready for that . . . but I feel so badly, for it seems I'm always hurting you one way or the other."

He looked deep into her eyes for a few seconds, then said, "Don't you worry about me, sweet, just get yourself back to your normal, happy self, and I shall be happy then, too."

"Thanks Robby, you are a dear. Now I really must go."

As they neared the house they found Margie coming to meet them. She called out, "Hurry up, Betty! There's long distance on the phone! New York calling, they said!"

Robby heard a gasp escape her lips, and he saw her face go deathly pale. To himself he vowed, "If that damn ape is going to try and hurt her any more, I'll kill him." He followed her into the house and, as the phone was in the main room, he could not avoid hearing what she said.

Her heart was beating like a triphammer, and she promised herself that if it was Phillip she would hang up immediately. She placed the receiver to her ear, and said, "Hello!" The operator answered, and asked, "Are you Mrs. Phillip Morton?"

"Yes, Operator, this is she." The operator asked her to wait.

Then a man's voice came on the wire, and he said, "Hello! Hello, Elizabeth?"

"Yes, this is Elizabeth; who is calling?"

"This is Kurt Kurtsel."

"Oh Kurt! Hello! How are you? And how is Minna? Gee, it's good to hear your voice!"

Kurt replied they were both well, then said how sorry they had been to hear of all her troubles with Phillip, but that he was glad that was over and done with, for it never had been too good an arrangement in the first place.

She agreed with him, then asked, "What are you two doing in New York, Kurt? How come you're not up at Montreal?"

"It's quite a long story, Elizabeth, but I'm going on concert tour to Europe." Then he added, "Would you like to come along, and do some grand opera for a change? I know it's what you've always wanted to do."

"Oh, I don't know Kurt! Am I good enough for that? Or rather, am I ready for that?" she asked him.

"You'll do all right," he answered, in such a voice that her heart took a leap. If Kurt thought she could do it, then she could.

"But give me some of the details, Kurt; when is this to be? And what operas are you featuring, and so on?"

"Can you come back to New York, and go into rehearsal immediately? We'll need at least a month to get ready, and the bookings are for September and October on the Continent, and then to London in November," Kurt informed her.

"Can I call you back later, Kurt? Say this evening, as I'm at my sister's, and I'd like to talk it over with the family before I decide."

He assured her that would be fine, but to be sure and call back that night. Then he gave her the number to call, and said, "Minna sends her love!"

Betty hung up the receiver, and stood for a moment staring into the phone; when she turned around there were stars in her eyes, as she looked at Margie and Robby. "You heard, didn't you?" she asked them. "Europe! Just what I've always dreamed of! Isn't it wonderful?"

Margie replied first, "I guess so, Sis, but gosh! . . . you've hardly gotten here, and now you're going to take off again!"

"Yes, I know, Margie, but this kind of opportunity doesn't

come along very often. If I turn this down, I'll never have a chance like it, more than likely."

"I suppose you are right, at that, but I hate to have you leave so soon; I thought you'd be here all summer anyway, didn't you, Robby?" and she turned to face him.

There was an expression of complete resignation on his face, but he came to her rescue and said, "Yes, we do hate to lose you so soon, but I can see it is a splendid opportunity, and one you shouldn't miss under any circumstances. She won't be gone forever, Margie."

Betty left soon after, and when she broke the news to Mom, Pop, and Janet, Mom told her they knew all about it, as she could not help but listen while she talked to Kurt. The call had come home first, and she had transferred it to Margie's. They naturally were heartbroken to lose her so soon, but they agreed she must not miss such a wonderful chance. Later she put her call through to Kurt, and told him she would be in New York the following week.

Pat and Mary agreed between them that regardless of how they hated to have her leave so soon it was exactly what she needed to take her mind off the nasty mess she had just been through. In their hearts they thanked Kurt and Minna; even though they did not know them, they decided they must be wonderful people.

When word got around that Betty was leaving so soon, everyone got busy on the telephone and started plans rolling, so consequently Saturday night the Manns had an unexpected party. Such a crowd! all the old bunch, plus oodles of people she did not know at all; also the young fry, who had grown up in the six years she had been away. She looked at those youngsters, who took complete possession of the dance floor, and wondered where those six years had flown to.

Jack and Loretta, Margie and Johnny, Robby, Elyse, and Don, had been in on the plans, so, unknown to Betty and the others, they strung wires in the trees for lights, and fixed things in the yard, so the guests could at least eat out there. It was a mild

evening, and a great many spent most of their time out in the yard, as the house was hot and crowded.

Betty and Robby danced together early in the evening, and she had been surprised to find such a natural, warm comfort there in his arms. Later they wandered off for a stroll. A bright moon made it almost as light as day, and their wandering led them down one of the coulee paths. They stopped under a drooping willow to gaze at the crystal-clear water; as it bubbled over the rocks the moon caught it here and there and made it look as if it were studded with diamonds.

Robby's arm rested lightly on Betty's shoulders; she let her head drop against him, and a sigh escaped through her lips. He tensed his body to keep from crushing her to him; but he had made up his mind that he would not rush her again. She must make the overtures from now on, as there was too big an ache in his heart after she repulsed him each time. However, it was almost more than he could stand, to feel the warm, vibrant body leaning against him. Suddenly she turned toward him and whispered, "Oh, Robby! Please hold me close!"

Something like a moan escaped him, as he drew her into his arms. He felt the force of her body against his, and he dropped his head, his lips searching for hers. Her arms came up around his neck, and forced him toward her. Then their lips met in a burning kiss, which lasted forever, it seemed. Finally her head dropped against his chest, and she could hear his heart pounding as if it would burst its bounds. He buried his face in her curls, and whispered, "Oh, my dear! My very own dear! Just to hold you like this once again is worth everything. I don't think I could have stood it much longer. And to think, now that I've found you, I'm going to lose you so soon again."

"Truly, Robby, I had forgotten how wonderful it was in your arms. Such a peace and quiet settles over me that I just dread to move and break the spell." She pushed back enough from him to look up into his eyes, and they stood as if spellbound for several minutes. Then he crushed her to him again and kissed her fervently; but finally she exclaimed, "It must be almost time for midnight supper, and the guest of honor not any-

where in sight. If they only knew she was down in the coulee being necked by a very fresh young man."

"You imp!" he exclaimed, and attempted to pull her into his arms again, but she was firm in her reply: "No, my dear, I mean it! We simply must go back to the house now!"

Sunday and Monday sped on wings, it seemed, and Tuesday morning was upon them. Such rushing and turmoil, as they attempted to get all the last-minute details done; then it was time to leave for the train. Good-byes were said, which were always a pain in the neck, but finally that part was over, too, and Mom, Pop, Janet, and Betty were in Robby's car and headed for the station.

Thank goodness there were only a few minutes before the train made its appearance down the track. There was no time for prolonged good-byes, but as Robby's arms closed around her he managed to whisper, "For gosh sakes, write this time, Princess, as I'm going to die a thousand deaths waiting for your return again." Then she was up the steps, and the train was moving. She stood and waved, for as long as they were in sight.

The train ride was uneventful, but the farther east they got, and the closer to New York, the more terrific the heat became. It brought up memories of long, tiresome rehearsals for Phillip's show. Betty was hot, tired, and depressed, and she wished with all her heart she was back home, where at least the nights were cool. Why couldn't she settle down, marry Robby, and be a good dutiful wife? But something seemed to be pushing her . . . pushing her!

At last she was in all the bustle and turmoil of New York's Grand Central Station. She heard her name called, and she looked into the grinning faces of Kurt and Minna. Minna folded her to her ample bosom, and all the miseries she had been heaping upon herself slipped away, and she was her happy self again.

Despite the heat and the long, grueling hours of rehearsal—and Kurt was a worse slave-driver than Phillip had ever been—

Betty enjoyed it. For who in the world could be unhappy around such wonderful people as Kurt and Minna? They always managed to find a few laughs each day, to lessen the tension they all worked under. Even the members of Kurt's orchestra managed to keep their tempers under control, though he drove them like a demon at times. One minute he yelled at them, and pulled his yellow hair, the next laughed, as he recited some funny incident.

Betty found Minna a source of comfort and help, too, for Minna had followed the concert stage before she and Kurt were married, then had given it up to follow her husband as he traveled here and there filling engagements. She gave Betty many pointers on European deportment; even showed her the proper form of curtsey for royalty, but explained to her that it would not be necessary for her to use it unless she felt so inclined, for it was not expected of Americans.

With such a busy grind at rehearsal, there was not much time to renew old acquaintances, and Betty was glad, as there was the constant worry of meeting Phillip face-to-face. But it had to be, it seemed, much as she dreaded it. She went with Kurt and Minna to a reception being given in their honor. The introductions were scarcely over, when a familiar voice said, "My word, but you are looking splendid, Elizabeth!"

As she turned her head quickly, she found black, flashing eyes meeting hers. A slow flush started to mount to her face, but she quickly managed to control herself, extended her hand, and quietly said, "Hello, Phillip, you're looking well yourself."

He suggested, "Let's find a quiet spot to talk, as my heart is doing regular nip-ups," and he started to take her arm to lead her away.

However, she held her ground, and said, "I'm sure we haven't anything to talk about, Phillip." Her own heart was thumping, and she glanced about for Kurt or Minna. Then Kurt's voice came to her over her shoulder, "Hello, Phillip! How's tricks?" He came close to Betty and placed a hand on her arm, then added, "Elizabeth, my dear, I've a very old friend over here who is dying to meet you. You'll excuse us, Phillip? See you later!"

He could feel Betty trembling as he led her away, so he whispered, "Don't let that rotter upset you, my dear! He's not worth one of your little fingers."

She looked up into his kindly face and said, "Thanks for the rescue, Kurt." Then she giggled, and added, "I'll bet I looked as if some ogre was going to eat me up when you came along, eh? I'm all right now; the panic is all gone, and I'm sure it is never going to return."

"I'm so glad, my dear. I can bet it was pretty awful for a few minutes; however, I had been watching to be able to come to your rescue if you needed me. But for all that, I'm glad it happened."

"I am too, Kurt, for there was that wee speck of doubt in my heart, which I couldn't seem to rid myself of. Then suddenly as I stood and looked at him, and especially when he touched my arm, I knew then and there he was nothing to me." There was silence for a second, then she added, "It's good, Kurt, to be rid of that doubt."

"Yes, I'm sure it is! Now your tour is going to be a wonderful success, with that off your mind." They joined Minna then, and she glanced at Betty with a question in her eyes. Betty laughed and said, "Everything is under control, Minna, and I feel wonderful! Let's celebrate, shall we?" Minna reached for her hand and gave it a light squeeze. "That's a wonderful idea, Betty! What do you say, Kurt? Just the three of us!"

He agreed, and they bade their hostess a hurried good night and left to carry out their own celebration.

Everyone was aboard the luxury liner, and there was an hour or so to go before sailing time. Kurt, Minna, Betty, and the members of the orchestra and chorus had one whole section near one another. The place was in a wild turmoil, as everyone milled about. Kurt's bootlegger had managed a great many cases of champagne, so they were all in a hilarious mood. The wives and families of the men in the orchestra were on hand to bid them bon voyage, as well as many friends.

Betty stopped for a minute in her stateroom, and found Ruby there amid luggage, flowers, and gifts galore. Yes, Betty had decided she needed Ruby to help her through this tour, and the colored girl seemed happy and delighted to be able to come with her.

She stopped in front of a mirror and gave a quick retouch to her make-up. Ruby watched her, then said, "Oh, Miss Betty, you've got regular stars in your eyes! I'm so happy to see you your old laughing self again."

"Thank you, Ruby! It feels wonderful, too!" As she prepared to leave, she suggested, "Maybe you better come along to the Kurtsels' stateroom, and give a hand in there with the guests."

"Yes, Miss Betty, I'll be right there," she answered, as she placed another sheaf of roses in water.

Then, almost at once, it seemed, the guests were all gone and the boat was moving out of the harbor.

Betty was amazed at the size of the immense boat; it was a regular city all to itself. She investigated every inch she was permitted to; enjoyed the easy, carefree friendliness of everyone; took quick healthy walks around the deck, then settled into a chair, and in the sunny salt air would fall asleep like a babe in arms. She'd wake from a nap happy and rested, ready for an evening of gaiety. She did not lack for attention, as practically every man aboard was more than half in love with her, and she accepted it all in her gracious manner. It seemed she felt like her own happy self again after that meeting with Phillip. She sat on deck and wrote long newsy letters to her family, and whole volumes to Robby. She would pour out every moment and share it with him.

When they passed the southern tip of Ireland, Betty promised herself she was going to stop over on the way home, and visit the places her great-grandparents had come from.

They docked at Southampton, but did not leave the boat, as they were going on immediately to France; and soon they were in the English Channel making for the coast of France. At Cherbourg they boarded a train for Paris. Betty was intrigued by the trains, and when she, Minna, and Kurt were settled into

a compartment, she exclaimed to them, "Imagine, I'm on my way to Paris! Paris . . . to shop! The desire and wish of every woman the world over. Oh, Minna, I can hardly wait!" Then she turned to Kurt and asked, "How many days are we going to be there?"

"You women can have exactly three days, then we'll only have time enough left to make Budapest for our opening," he told them, he looked at Minna and asked, "How do you feel about coming home, my dear?"

"It is a good feeling, Kurt, and I know we are going to enjoy it; seeing old, old friends, and familiar scenes, but I can imagine we shall be very glad to go home, to our dear America, when the time comes."

He placed his hand over hers, and admitted, "Yes, our America will seem good to get home to, I know."

What fun they had in Paris, as they tried to crowd into three short days hundreds of things to do. Such shopping orgies as Betty and Minna went on! There had been a stack of trunks for each one to begin with, but now they grew beyond all bounds.

Such sightseeing trips! A million things to see, and no time to see them in! It would just have to be some other time, for the first thing Betty and Minna knew Kurt had them aboard the slow-moving train, headed for Budapest.

Opening night was an event Betty would never forget. Tiers and tiers of people, the women beautifully gowned, and such a glitter of jewels winking from each tier. Many of the men were in uniform, most of which were bright and colorful, too.

She took a quick peek while the overture was being played, then became so nervous her teeth chattered. Minna found her in the wings, took one look at her, then put her strong arms around her and in a very firm voice told her to pull herself together instantly.

"But Minna, what if I should forget the German we've worked so hard on?" Betty whimpered. "At the moment my mind is a perfect blank."

"You'll remember as soon as the music starts," Minna consoled,

"it is always like this the first time. You won't be alone, for the chorus will be in the background to help lift your morale, if you should need it, but I doubt you shall."

There were the opening bars, and now the curtain was going up. She braced herself for her entrance. Like a sleepwalker, she came upon the stage . . . then the first thing her eyes fell upon was Kurt's round face at the footlights. He smiled at her, and then with a rush the words came to her. Yes, yes, that's right! Kurt nodded his head in accord. Now she was all right, carrying through solo parts, duets, and with the chorus. The audience was carried away as she lifted her lovely voice, and when she finished they would not let her go; but finally it was all over, and she was back in her dressing-room. At last all those childhood dreams had come to pass, and she had given her first big concert! She sat and stared at herself in the mirror. She hoped with all her heart that all the audiences would be as kind and appreciative as this one tonight had been. She brought herself back to the present, as she heard Minna talking to Ruby. Minna came on in, followed by Kurt, and they both kissed her, then told her how well she had done. "But hurry, dear, and change, as dozens of people are waiting to meet you," Minna informed her.

The days flew by at Budapest, and once again they were on their way. This time to Vienna, beautiful, lovely Vienna, which Betty had been reading about since she was a child. To think she was really going to sing there! And Vienna, music-loving town that it was, received them with open arms; then on to Prague; everywhere, everyone took her to their hearts, and made a tremendous fuss over her. Then there was the long train ride down to Geneva, and on to Rome. It all seemed like a beautiful dream to Betty. She couldn't seem to realize she was actually here, and all this was happening to her. The days, the weeks, slipped by, and the first thing she knew she was back in Paris, to give her final concerts before leaving for London.

She had visited the Riviera, Monte Carlo, Naples, and all the famous places she had been hearing about all her life. There were parties and more parties, until she had begun to feel a strain.

She sat in her suite at the hotel, after her final appearances in Paris, and watched Ruby busy with the trunks and cases, as she got them packed and ready to be taken down and shipped. Finally she asked, "Do you happen to know where my writing materials are, Ruby? I simply must send a few lines home tonight. They will be feeling neglected, as I've been so swamped I haven't managed anything but a card in days."

Ruby brought the case, which contained everything she needed. Quickly she dashed off a few lines to Mom and Pop, and enclosed a short note to Margie and Loretta and their families; then she prepared to write a long letter to Robby. But she sat staring at the paper in front of her, and wished he were near enough to talk to. There was so much to say, and it was hard to put it all on paper. She'd been terribly lonesome for him, the past few days, and now she knew she would be glad to be home again with them all. Finally she put the case away; maybe tomorrow she would be more in the mood.

It was cold, with a drizzly rain, the following day when they crossed the channel. They were all glad when the boat docked at Brighton, glad to get into the train to Croyden, and on to London.

Arriving late in London, they were whisked away immediately to their respective hotels. Betty had a suite adjoining Kurt and Minna. She had not had any worry about reservations on the whole trip. Kurt had a chap, whom he called Jake, who did all the buffeting for them, and as a result of his maneuvers, everything went along like a well-oiled machine. Kurt said it was worth the price he cost not to have the worry of the whole thing. They were quite a group, as Kurt's orchestra carried a personnel of fifty musicians, and a chorus of twenty, besides Kurt, Minna and Betty; then there was Ruby, Betty's maid, and Minna had a married couple who cared for herself and Kurt. There was also Kurt's secretary; then old Tim, who looked after their baggage and props, saw that it was all ready to be shipped, and checked up on it again when they arrived. Old Tim also hired the prop boys and stage hands necessary for each performance. Yes, they were quite a group!

And so far it had been a successful tour, from a monetary standpoint; the theaters had been packed to their capacity each time. They did not know yet how London would receive them, but the Continent was music-hungry—that was certain.

"London! This is one town I must manage to see!" Betty mused aloud to herself. The Thames River, with its wonderful bridges: London Bridge, Waterloo Bridge, Westminister Bridge, and many more! Then there was Hyde Park; Regent Park; St. James Park, with Buckingham Palace; Kensington and Kew Gardens; Trafalgar Square and Pershing Square; St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminister Abbey! The names and places crowded across her memory. Remembering her history books at school, and all the names she had read about for years, and then actually knowing she was going to be able to see them, was almost more than she could bear. Her only regret was that she had such a limited time in each place—not nearly long enough to visit and see everything. But some day she would return, and then slowly and leisurely visit them all.

Bright and early the following morning, she bounded out of bed, and listened for some movement in Kurt and Minna's suite. She didn't hear a sound, so she dressed quickly in comfortable clothes, and left for a walk. She had been aching for a good long tramp for days, and the misty morning was ideal for it. She just walked and walked, and looked and looked. Everywhere names brought memories of things she'd read about.

When she arrived back at the hotel, a good two hours later, Kurt and Minna were just waking. She rapped on the adjoining door, and called, "You sleepyheads going to stay there all day?"

"Come on in!" Minna called back. She entered, and when they saw that she was dressed they asked where she was off to at this ungodly hour.

She laughed and answered, "I'm not off anywhere, I'm just returning from a good two-hour walk." Then she really laughed when she saw the look of incredulity on their faces.

Kurt sat up quickly and demanded, "You are well, Elizabeth?"

"I never felt better, except for being a little tired; but the walk wasn't responsible for that," she quickly added; "that's from too many late parties on the Continent. I do hope they ease up a bit here."

"They won't, will they?" Minna offered, then looked at Kurt to verify her statement.

"No, there will be more, if that is possible," he told her, "for we know a great many people here in England, and they at least will want to entertain. No, I'm afraid there will not be less parties, my dear."

She sighed, then said, "Well, I hope my good old Saskatchewan upbringing will see me through it all."

There was a rap upon the door, and when Betty went to answer it she found Kurt's man there to tell them breakfast was ready to be brought up.

"Bring Miss Elizabeth's in here this morning, as she will eat with us," Kurt advised him.

When the man closed the door behind him, Betty started to giggle, and Minna asked, "What's so funny?"

"If some of my friends back home could see me being served my breakfast in bed some morning, they'd think for sure I'd gone daft."

They joined in the laughter, and agreed that in Canada or the United States it would seem ridiculous, but it was the custom over here, so they might as well take advantage of it.

Betty left then to go to her own room to remove her hat and coat, but she assured them she would return in a few minutes for breakfast. As she entered she found Ruby there, and the maid looked at her and asked, "Where you been so early, Miss Betty? I come up over an hour ago, and you was already gone."

"I just went for an early walk, Ruby."

"Well, seems to me you should better stay in bed, and rest up after all that highfalutin gallivantin' all over Europe," she grumbled. "You didn't get any more sleep than a goldfish in a glass bowl. You'll get sick, then where we gonna be?"

Betty laughed and said, "Thanks, Ruby, for being so solicitous,

and it was pretty strenuous at that, but as I told the Kurtsels, I'm counting on my extra stamina, built up on Pop's farm in Saskatchewan. It'll see me through, I'm sure."

"Well, I sure do hope so," Ruby replied, but with not too much assurance in her voice. "I'll go get you breakfast now," and she started for the door.

"Oh, I forgot to tell you, Ruby, Evans is bringing my breakfast with the Kurtsels' this morning. You won't have to bother, this time."

Breakfast was no sooner over, than Kurt was in a dither to get to the theater, and be busy at his rehearsals. Minna and Betty glanced at one another; Kurt, catching the look, said, "You can have until three o'clock to go shopping, or whatever it is you want to do, but Elizabeth, we'll be ready for you by three, I'm sure."

"I'll be there," she assured him, and as soon as he was out the door she and Minna started to work out a plan whereby they could see and do the most possible each day.

Opening night was a grand success, and everything ran like clockwork. Betty's room overflowed with flowers, and Ruby was beside herself each time she found a card with another title on it. There had been scores of them on the Continent, but tonight it seemed they had all been in London to attend the opera.

When Kurt and Minna came to her dressing-room, they informed her that the entire Royal Family had been present. Betty's hands flew to her face, and she exclaimed, "Oh, no! I'm certainly glad I didn't know that, or I'd have flopped as sure as shooting!"

"You would not have done any such thing!" Minna told her. "You sang before all kinds of them in Europe."

"But King George and Queen Mary, they are different!" Then she sat and stared into space.

"Why are they any different than the others?" Kurt wanted to know.

"Why? Well, maybe I can't put it into words, but I'll try. From the time you are a youngster in school, you are taught to give them your respect at all times. Then each morning you

sing *God Save the King*, and he becomes a sort of symbol to you. Consequently, you look up to him and respect him, also the Queen and their children." She hesitated. "That's very badly put, for it didn't sound at all like I wanted it to, but it's hard to put into words, for it's a sort of something in your heart."

"It's a lovely thought, though," Minna agreed, then asked, "Do all Canadians feel that way?"

"I'm sure I can't say about that. I thought you folks knew I had been born in the States, but I have lived in Canada since I was eleven years old. However, it is more than likely real Canadians feel more strongly on the subject than I do."

Kurt agreed, too, that it was a wonderful way for people to show their respect, then he said, "I almost forgot to tell you two about tomorrow night. The three of us have an invitation to an affair being put on by that prince we met in the southern part of Italy. You know the one I mean, don't you?"

"Oh, not really!" Betty exclaimed. "How perfectly scrumptious! Let's see, his name was Prince Davion, wasn't it?"

"Yes, that's the chap," Kurt responded.

Betty giggled, and when Minna asked what was so funny, she replied, "Not much, really, only I was thinking of how envious all the girls at home were going to be when they learn I've been hobnobbing with a prince. You know it's almost like when I was a kid, and used to sit and spin fairy tales to myself, then build cloud castles for them out of the fleecy clouds in the sky."

Kurt and Minna looked at her lovingly, and marveled that she could remain so unspoiled amid all the glamor and fuss bestowed upon her.

The following night Betty took the greatest of care in dressing for the party. The dress, in the beautiful shade of blue she wore so well, was an exceptionally lovely creation she had bought in Paris. When she was all dressed she looked in the mirror, and a wish went through her heart that Robby might be present, as he had always liked to see her dressed in blue. She tried out her curtsy, and debated with herself over whether she should use it when presented to the Prince, but finally decided

that the decision would have to be left until the time came; then, if the circumstances warranted a curtsy, she would use it. But it definitely was discarded, for she got the surprise of her life when they arrived at the party. She found a hilarious group assembled, some talking and laughing, others grouped around the piano listening to someone sing and play all the popular songs.

A servant met them at the door, took Kurt's coat and hat, and directed her and Minna to a powder room. When they entered the main room where all the laughter and fun was going on, Kurt came toward them; and as he drew closer, Betty noticed he had Prince Davion with him. He was a slight young man with dark wavy hair, and eyes which were blue, blue. The eyes had a merry twinkle in them, and they crinkled up at the corners when he smiled.

Kurt squared his shoulders, put on a long face, then announced, "His Royal Highness, Prince Davion!" He turned toward the Prince and said, "May I present my wife, Mrs. Kurtsel; and this is Miss Elizabeth Mann, whom I believe you met on the Continent."

The Prince extended his hand in a friendly manner to Minna and said, "How do you do, Mrs. Kurtsell! This is a very great pleasure!" Then he turned toward Betty, took her hand in his, looked intently into her eyes, and said, "By jove, but you are prettier than ever!" As he saw a flush spread over her face, he quickly added, "I beg your pardon, Miss Mann, that was quite fresh, but may I assure you, I am most happy to see you again, and before I take another breath I must tell you that you have a beautiful voice, and we all enjoyed your singing so much; also, that I really feel we have something in common, as you see I'm a Canadian neighbor of yours part of each year."

Seeing the look of surprise upon Betty's face, he hastened to add, "I own a large range of beef cattle in Alberta, and each year during the summer I go there, and believe me it is the best part of each year as far as I'm concerned."

Then he and Betty exchanged pleasantries about Canada in general, but soon several people started crowding around, de-

manding an introduction. Betty met scores of them, many with high-sounding titles, but everyone was lovely and treated her in a friendly manner. She stood for a few minutes in a group, and as they chatted on a subject she was not acquainted with, she let her gaze wander over the room. Soon her eyes found Prince Davion across from her. He was talking to a tall, blond man, and her heart turned over in her bosom, for he looked so much like Robby. "Oh!" A gasp escaped her, for it *was* Robby, and he and the Prince were walking toward her. She tried to move but her feet seemed glued to the floor. Finally some force did move her, and the next moment she was being kissed by Robby. She looked up at him, touched him to see if he was real. He chuckled happily as he saw her joy, then asked, "Surprised, eh, Princess?"

"Oh, Robby! I never was so glad to see anyone in my life!" she exclaimed. She still hung on to his arm, and looked into his face with her heart in her eyes.

Then the Prince spoke up and said, "Listen! You two follow me!" and he led the way. He opened the door into a sort of parlor-den and suggested, "You two get acquainted in here, away from the stares of the mob, but be sure you make an appearance later on, especially for supper."

Robby assured him they would be out in a little while, and the door closed quietly behind the Prince. Betty flew into his arms pleading, "Oh, Robby! Hold me tight, tight! Gosh! I hope I'm not going to cry, but I think I am."

"If you want to cry, sweetheart, you just go right ahead," he said, and assured her he had the best shoulder in the world for that.

Soon she stopped and, looking up at him, said, "My heart almost stopped when I saw a big, tall, blond man, because I thought he resembled you, but I just couldn't believe my eyes that it really was you; even when you kissed me I couldn't believe it. How come you're over here? And how come I wasn't told you were coming?"

"One at a time, sweet! First, I'm here for a show of my prize animals; second, but most important, I'm here to hear a

beautiful opera star sing; third, I'm . . ." he hesitated, then asked, "do you want to hear the rest?"

She glanced up at him, and her eyes were dancing. She nodded her head yes, and said, "Please go on."

He drew her close and whispered, "Third, I'm here because I thought it would be wonderful . . . if we could see some of the sights together," he finished lamely.

She drew in a quick breath; that wasn't what she expected him to say. Then rapid thoughts flashed through her mind: Poor Robby, he's afraid I might say no again, and I'm sure he couldn't bear another refusal. She looked up at him, then both arms stole around his neck. "It would be fun to see the sights together, but kind of awkward for two single people to travel that way, wouldn't it?"

A quick eager light came into his eyes, and he asked, "You mean you would, Princess?"

Now it was her turn to tease, so she asked, "You mean I would what? Travel with you single? Or do you mean would I marry you?"

"You vixen!" he exclaimed. "You know exactly what I mean, but I'll put it real proper-like." Placing his cheek against hers, he breathed the words close to her ear: "Darlingest Betty, will you marry me?"

Quick as a flash she answered, "Oh, yes, Robby! Any time! Just anytime you say!"

His lips found hers in a long kiss, then he reached down and picked her up in his arms, and he sank into one of the deep, upholstered chairs, keeping her cradled in his arms as if he would never let her go.

"Oh, Betty, I feel weak as a cat! I just had to sit down, or I might have fallen down."

She admitted, "I feel pretty shaky myself, but . . . oh, what a wonderful feeling!"

They sat for a long while in silence, then Robby said, "First thing tomorrow I'll get your ring. I could have had it, but I've always been afraid to buy one, in case it might be bad luck or something."

"I don't even care whether I have a ring or not. Just to have you is all that matters."

"You're sweet!" He hesitated for quite a while, then said, "This is what I've been thinking: we'll get married right after you are through here, then maybe we'll take a little honeymoon trip over to Ireland, and let you see where your great grandparents were born—I know you've often said you would like to go there. Then a quick trip to Scotland, and then a boat ride back over the channel to France, Switzerland, and Italy, as I'm sure you didn't have time to see much on your tour. We've three months, if we want to take that long, before I have to be home. How does that sound, darling?"

She placed a hand on each side of his face, looked deep into his eyes, and said, "My darling, you've always been a mind-reader where I'm concerned. It will be perfect, and especially as it will be with you!" Then, of her own accord, the very first time in all the years he had known her, she kissed him full upon the lips. His arms tightened and he held her close. A long silence . . . then he asked, "Do you have any plans for concert tours or shows which you have to do in the near future?"

"No, darling, no plans; at least none of that nature." She hesitated, then asked, "Would you be interested in the ones I have?"

"Of course, dear! You know that without asking! I'm always interested where you are concerned."

"Well then, these are the plans I have, to date. First, of course, our lovely honeymoon! Then home! By the way, where are we going to live?"

"We'll have to sort of bunk until we build, darling. I have a spot all picked out, but it must have your approval, too."

"That's fine, dear, but it must have at least four bedrooms. Nice, big, airy rooms!" She waited for him to answer, and when there was no reply, she asked, "Don't you want to know why?"

"I'd love to know," he teased, as if he didn't know, then added, "but you still haven't told me anything about your singing career."

"Oh, that; well, mostly I shall be busy singing lullabies, or entertaining the Ladies' Aid, or a social function, and then of

course there is my choir work, and there will be Christmas Concerts. I'm going to have a very heavy schedule!"

He chuckled, then asked, "So the airy bedrooms are for our family, eh, Princess?"

"Yes, darling, our family! Doesn't it sound exciting?"

A discreet rap on the door; then Prince Davion stuck his head in: "Say, come on, you two! The food is going to be all gone if you don't hurry!"

They jumped up like two startled children caught stealing jam, then they both laughed. Robby went to the door, and pulled him inside. "How would you like to be the first to congratulate us? I've only been pleading with her for ten years, and now she agrees we should have been married years ago."

"Congratulations, both of you!" He offered each one a hand. "Of course I expected some such thing; that's why I steered you in here, so you could get it over with. Come on, now!" And he pushed them ahead of him toward the door. "Not that either one of you will be able to eat plain ordinary food; ambrosia would perhaps be more in order, eh?" He held each one by the arm, and steered them straight across the room to the piano; then he stopped and struck a brisk chord on the keys, and waited for silence. As everyone looked toward them, he said, "May I make an announcement? I'm sure you all met the charming Miss Mann, who has won all our hearts with her beautiful singing. She has just betrothed herself to this tall, handsome stranger. May I present Mr. Robert Stewart, an old friend and buddy of mine from Saskatchewan, Canada, which, by the way, is where Miss Mann's home is, too. It's taken Rob ten whole years to plead his case to Miss Mann, and then he had to come all the way to merry old England to finally settle the question. I'm sure all of you join me in wishing them long life and every happiness."

The group broke into an applause, and many came forward to offer their best wishes. The Prince bent his head, and kissed Betty's hand, then he shook Robby's hand, and a look of good friendly fellowship passed between them. The thought passed through Betty's mind, What a splendid, democratic chap he is,

and everyone seems to like him so much; no wonder so many flock to his parties!

The rest of the time in London was like a beautiful dream to Betty. Kurt and Minna would have been worried about her, except that her singing was superb. She reached the highest point of her career in those few short concerts. Everyone was talking about her, and the papers could not praise her enough, which was rather unusual for conservative England. But Betty was completely unconscious of the furor she was causing.

In his heart Robby was glad, for each day he was afraid she might change her mind, and want to continue with her career; but so long as she remained in this dream world which she seemed to be living in everything would be fine.

They hired a hack one morning and went for a ride. As the hack jogged along, Betty suddenly asked, "Darling, would you think me silly or sentimental if I asked to be married some place besides here?"

"I'm sure I wouldn't, sweet, as long as it's somewhere we can reach, and it won't take too long to get there. I hope it's not on the moon, though, for as much as I'd love to grant your every wish, I'm afraid I couldn't accomplish that," and he laughed to offset making a joke of her wish.

"Silly!" she said, but it was a word of love, and she squeezed his hand. She went on to explain, "I'd love for you to go to Londonderry in the north of Ireland, and make the necessary arrangements at the Protestant Church there. That's where Pop's grandmother and grandfather were married," as she answered the questioning look on his face. "Then I'll come on over with Minna and Kurt, as they have insisted they want to stand for us, and have already said they will go over with me as soon as Kurt gets all the company safely aboard boat, and on their way home. You don't look as if you thought it such a bright idea."

"The idea's fine, it's just my impatience getting in the way, I guess. The only part I can seem to think about is the extra three or four days to wait before we can be married. But, darling,

if that is what you really want that is what you shall have. By the way, speaking of marriage, I better give you this." He took from his vest pocket a small box, which he opened and handed to her. Her eyes opened wide as she stared at the beautiful ring, nestled in folds of pink satin. "That's never for me! Is it?" she questioned.

He assured her it certainly was, and she sat staring at it, then asked, "They're diamonds, aren't they? But what kind? I've never seen anything like them before!"

"They're pink African diamonds, and quite rare, so I thought you might enjoy them. We have Prince Davion to thank, as he managed to find them for me."

Two identical stones were set side by side, flanked with smaller stones down each shank, and the whole thing was set in pink gold. While she still looked at it, Robby brought out another box in which were two wedding bands, in the same pink gold. She was silent for several minutes, then softly said, "Robby, without a doubt you are the nicest person I know! The rings are out of this world! I just don't ever remember seeing anything so beautiful!"

"I'm glad you like them, and now how about letting me put the diamond one on your finger?" He reached for her hand, and slipped the ring on. It fit perfectly . . . and then they looked deep into one another's eyes. Robby finally said, "I can't kiss you like I want in front of all these passers-by, but I'll make up for that later!"

"I can just bet you will!" and she laughed up into his face.

Before the ride was over, Betty decided she was going to be married in a suit, as it would not be proper to have a veil and all the trimmings for a second marriage. She would never have that pleasure in her life, as her marriage to Phillip had been on the spur of the moment, with no time to acquire such things. How she wished she could have worn them for Robby's sake; but when she spoke of it to him he assured her he did not mind at all. The clothes part were mere trivia as far as he was concerned. The only part he was explicit about was that he was not to be asked to wear one of those coats with a tail, and striped

pants. Betty agreed with him that he should wear his navy-blue business suit, with a conservative tie.

The last few days dragged slowly for Betty. Robby had left for Londonderry several days ago. Betty, Minna, and Kurt had just returned to their hotel, after seeing the entire company off to America. They had Kurt's promise that he would see them all in New York the following week.

Ruby had been heartbroken when Betty informed her she was to return home with the rest, as she could not see any place, in the plans they had, for a maid to be traveling with them.

The following day the three of them took the train across country to Liverpool, where they boarded a boat which plied its way through the Irish Sea to the North Channel, and on to Londonderry.

Robby had taken beautiful quarters for them, in a quaint little cottage which Betty fell in love with immediately. The wedding ceremony was long and very solemn, but impressive and beautiful, too. Betty could not help but let her gaze wander over the beautiful old church, which had stood since the sixteenth century.

Minna and Kurt would not be persuaded to stay over. As soon as the wedding breakfast was over, they started getting ready to board the liner on which they had booked passage to America.

While they pleaded with them to stay, Minna spoke up and said, "It's nice of you youngsters to insist we stay, but there is no place for an old married couple in the plans of newlyweds."

Kurt agreed she was right, so by seven thirty that evening Robby and Betty were alone, and both rather nervous and jumpy. As they ordered their dinner, Robby suggested that maybe they should have a bottle of good wine with it. Betty seldom took anything to drink, but she nodded her head yes. It did help to break the tension which had been building up between them, ever since the ceremony. After a leisurely dinner, they went for a stroll. They stopped for a while to listen to the band concert, then finally found themselves back at the little house. Robby said he was going to take a turn around the grounds and enjoy his

pipe, if she didn't mind. She assured him that would be fine, and went on in the house. She removed her hat and wandered around the main room, too nervous to sit down. Finally she went on into the bedroom, quickly disrobed, and slipped into a sheer gown and negligee, in a lovely shade of ice blue. She seated herself in front of the dressing-table, and let down her mass of curls. They tumbled over her shoulders, and as she looked at them she was glad she hadn't followed in everyone's footsteps and had them bobbed, although she had been tempted scores of times.

While she sat brushing her hair, Robby entered, and stopped in his tracks. "Truly, a fairy princess got into this room somehow!"

"Robby you've got to stop making me into something unreal all the time. First thing you know, you'll have me believing it myself." She changed her tone, and added, "I laid out your pajamas and robe in the dressing-room . . . my dear husband!"

Walking up behind her, he looked into her eyes through the mirror, then stooped and planted a kiss on top of her head, saying as he did so, "Thank you very much . . . my dear dutiful wife!" Their eyes met again in the mirror, and they giggled at one another. When he had turned to go into the dressing-room, she could not help but compare her first marriage-night with this. How panicky she had been that night! But now she was simply floating on a cloud.

Slipping out of her negligee, she jumped into bed, and sat propped up among the pillows when he came back into the room. As he stood looking at her, she stretched out both arms, and pleaded, "Please, my darling, come and hold me in your arms!"

A second invitation was not necessary, and as he folded her close in his arms she asked, "Am I not a shameless hussy, inviting you to hurry to bed?"

"Indeed you are not! There's nothing you could do would ever make you less than a princess in my eyes," he whispered. Then he suddenly became aware of her warm body against his, making him feel as though a million electric shocks were jolting through his bloodstream; he tightened his arms about her and found her

lips in a long kiss. Her body melted against his, their hearts beat in unison, and the two bodies became as one, as they poured out their love for one another.

Early daylight peeped through the curtains. Robby woke hardly knowing where he was for an instant; then his eyes fell upon the tousled head of curls on the other pillow. Curled up like a small kitten on her side of the bed, she was still asleep. As he gazed at her, there was the pain of tears, and his throat constricted from the hurt. To himself he said: How beautiful she is, and finally she is mine, all mine! Almost as if he had spoken the words aloud, the blue eyes opened and looked into his.

"Good morning, beautiful!" he whispered. She reached out her arms, and cradled his head against her breast. As she held him close, she said, "My very own dear! I feel such a terrible love for you, it hurts me, away down deep. How did I ever imagine there could ever have been anyone else but you; and this morning I feel guilty that I did not save myself for you alone. Can you ever quite forgive me for that, my dear?"

"Everyone makes mistakes, darling, and that should not be held against anyone, if they try to make the mistakes right; and surely nothing could be more right than you and I together, as if we were purposely made for each other. Don't you feel like that, dear?"

"It's hard to explain how I feel, Robby, but it's like as if there was no real me, and I was all a part of you. But, darling, let's not talk about it, it's too complicated to put into words—actions seem to tell the story plainer, and the one thing I want is for you to hold me tight and never, never let me get away from you again."

Then he took her into his arms, and as he looked down at her body it took his breath away. He pulled her close to him, and locked her to him in an all-consuming embrace, then whispered, "You could never get away from me again, darling, for I shall keep you locked forever in the prison of my love."

"What a meek prisoner I'm going to be! And what a delightful prison to be kept in!" she whispered back.

They thoroughly enjoyed their few day's stay in Ireland.

They took long hikes, for the only transportation seemed to be Shank's ponies, unless you hired a trap drawn by tiny burros or ponies. Betty thrilled to her first sight of heather; enjoyed standing chatting with the friendly people they met on their long tramps. Everyone had a cheery hello, or a wave of the hand for them.

But finally it was time for them to board the boat for Glasgow, and from then on Robby took command of the situation, for he had been in Scotland many times, to buy cattle and also to attend shows; and these last years he had had his own champions to show. Then too, his prize animals, which he had recently exhibited in England, were going to winter here, until he and Betty were ready to return home.

He had many friends, and Betty liked them all very much, but she found them considerably more conservative and quiet than the Irish.

Of course Betty had to visit the animals Robby had boarded here, and he was like an old mother hen with a brood of baby chicks. But eventually he was satisfied—everything that could be done for their best welfare had been taken care of—so they boarded a small boat at Edinburgh for a leisurely ride down along the coast of England, through the English Channel, along the west coast of France, into the Bay of Biscay, along the coast of Spain and Portugal to the Straits of Gibraltar, and into the waters of the blue Mediterranean.

Long, lazy, lovely days aboard ship had won a battle over Betty's frayed nerves. Each time she looked at Robby, tall, blond, and tanned as brown as a berry, her heart seemed to turn over. They sat in deck chairs and talked by the hour, or else sat in silence, and just dozed in the sun.

During one of these long, quiet talks, Robby asked her, "Betty, I've meaning to bring up an old problem of yours, but it seems that something always comes up to take my mind off it, before I get a chance. Remember how you used to always say that when you grew up you were going to try and create a better understanding and acquaintance between Canada and the United

States? Did you ever accomplish anything about it, as you went back and forth between the two countries?"

"No, I guess I didn't, Robby, but after making so many trips back and forth across the line between the two countries, I decided I had been wrong about it. Although the average individual does not know too much about the general make-up of each country, I did find that the American people and the Canadian people take it for granted that they are as one. An American meets a Canadian and he welcomes him as his next-door neighbor, and it works the same way if a Canadian meets an American. A simple way to put it, I guess, is that it's like living next door to someone. You know him when you meet him face-to-face, but you are outside of the inner workings of his home, and personally it's none of your business what goes on there, as long as you like him when you meet face-to-face. Gee! That sounds pretty complicated, doesn't it?"

Robby laughed and admitted, "Well, a little bit, but I think I do see what you mean. I'm glad, anyway, for you to get it straightened out in your own mind, for I know it used to bother you a great deal when you were younger."

"Yes, I have a very comfortable feeling about it all now, and often wonder why I spent so much time worrying about something that really never existed at all."

Robby and Betty spent Christmas and New Year's aboard boat, and it didn't seem real to them at all. How could Christmas be Christmas without snow, sleigh bells, evergreen trees, and Christmas Carols? But they ate oodles of turkey, with all the trimmings, and the boat had been decorated in happy holiday regalia. Everyone drank too much champagne, and they had a wild, hilarious time, but Betty and Robby agreed that they'd never miss being home when another Christmas came along. They both almost had the blues, thinking of the folks at home, and wondering what they were doing. But one thing they were sure of; the two families would be together, as they had for the past eleven years.

When they landed on the Continent, it became Betty's turn

to take over the sightseeing. Starting in the south of Italy at Naples, they traveled up to Rome, Bologna, and Venice, then back to Milan, down to Genoa, on to Monte Carlo, Nice, Cannes, Toulon, and Marseille. When they left Marseille, they headed for Switzerland, and admitted that they thoroughly enjoyed this tiny country. It was more like being home than any place they had visited. They found it very modern and democratic in its ways.

The days and weeks slipped by, and both were beginning to feel restless, from doing nothing in particular but having a lazy time. Finally one evening Robby asked rather abruptly, "How about going home?"

"Oh please, let's! I'm more than ready!" she told him.

That was all he needed, and the following day he set to. He made arrangements for his stock to be shipped home from Scotland; got all their papers in order; and booked passage for New York. Two days later they were on an immense liner bound for home.

They had to stop over a couple of days in New York, as they had promised Kurt and Minna they would do so. A cable reached them in plenty of time, so they were both at the dock to meet them.

Oh, how good to step foot on good old North American soil again! Also to hear English spoken on every side! The hustle and bustle of the streets; newsboys hawking their papers; the cars rushing here and there, honking their horns; even the familiar toot of the cop's whistle on the corner sounded good!

Minna and Kurt couldn't get over how well they both looked. "Imagine a tan at this time of the year!" Minna exclaimed to Betty. "One would think you'd been in Florida or Palm Springs!"

"That's what is left over from our boat trip in the Mediterranean," she said, "You should have seen Robby a month ago; he looked like a real South Sea Islander, he was that brown."

Later that same evening, they went to dinner with a group of friends, and had a lovely time. Although they did not see him, Phillip watched them from a small table, where he sat eating alone. He could not take his eyes off Betty's face, and he ad-

mitted to himself: She's more beautiful, if that's possible, and she is happy too. Following her eyes, he saw her give an extra-special smile to the man sitting across from her. A blond Viking! That must be the husband, for I've heard he was big and blond. Then a thought very peculiar to Phillip's temperament ran through his mind; Gad! What beautiful children those two are going to have!

Just before they left New York, Betty talked long-distance to Mom, and told her to get the red carpet out, as the wanderers would soon be home. And what a homecoming that was! Just the members of the two families, plus Stan and Kitty Carroll, and Elyse's husband Don. Seemed so good to be home again, with all the dear familiar faces around them. Both families showed their joy that Betty and Robby had got all their difficulties ironed out, and were finally married.

They both had to stay a few days with Mom and Pop, Robby going back and forth to his place each day; then, so there would not be any hard feelings, they stayed the rest of the week with Robby's mother and dad. There was only young Billy at home now, and everyone teased him and Janet about keeping all marriages in the family; but from the look of things in general, there were different plans afoot, as Billy had been squiring the youngest daughter of one of the best-known French families in the neighborhood. Anyway, Janet was still a child, and Billy a grown young man, facing his twenty-first birthday.

Margie could hardly wait for Betty and Robby to get done visiting and come home. She had outdone herself preparing for them, and Robby's room had been completely altered. It had lost all its masculine look, and took on the appearance of a woman's presence. Betty thanked her for that, as she had rather dreaded going into that plain, bleak room.

They weren't home many days before Robby suggested she come along and look at the spot he thought would be ideal for their house. They rode west from the main buildings for about half a mile. Coming up over a slope, he eased the car to a stop, then pointed ahead and asked, "How would it be about over there, on the top of that knoll?" Betty got out and walked

over to it, Robby following. There was a complete view of the whole farm from here, and to the west it sloped off to the coulee. The same one which ran through Pop's place had twisted and wound its way through this corner of Robby's farm.

"Oh, it's ideal, Robby! I didn't know the coulee hit through here, too. I like that, for it makes it seem really like home."

"I figured that, dear, knowing how you always enjoyed your strolls down there. I've made plans, too, but they will have to be changed some, as I really didn't include those four airy bedrooms you insist on." He gave her a grin, then asked, "Don't you think it would be nice to have a one-story, rambling house, like some we saw in the south of Europe? It will perhaps take a heap of heat to keep it warm in winter, but there's such a cozy, friendly look about them that I thought I'd like to try it out."

She slipped her arm through his, gave it a squeeze, and said, "It sounds elegant, dear! I'm sure I don't know how I'm ever going to wait for it to be finished!"

"We'll get right at it, and if all goes well, it should be showing signs of completion by July or August at the latest."

Plans ran along on schedule, and though everyone thought they were crazy to build that type of house, they still were envious, too, as they saw it advance, and realized all the advantages it was going to have over the general run of houses in the neighborhood.

Across the front ran a long veranda, which jutted out over the immense living-room with its scores of windows, and the dining-room and kitchen, which boasted a built-in breakfast nook. At the north end, and running into an ell at the west were the bedrooms and bath. Off the living-room to the west was the den, where Robby would keep his books, guns, pictures, and all his show trophies. The living-room and den each had an immense fireplace.

Betty's life was one turmoil of plans, and constant trips by car to Regina, to buy furniture, rugs, curtains, and so on to furnish the house. They had brought home many beautiful things from Europe, and she tried to plan her furnishings around these, so they would be shown off to the best advantage.

Late in July the house was ready to move into. Days and days had been spent washing windows, waxing floors, and so on. Tomorrow the furniture was coming down from Regina. When supper and dishes were finished, the two of them got into the car and drove over to look at it again, to be sure it was all ready for the furniture. They were both so impatient to be moved and settled that they could hardly stand even another day's wait.

They strolled from room to room, and finally came out the west door from the den. It was just sundown, and that lovely quiet time of the day. Betty stood in the crook of Robby's arm, and a sigh escaped her. Robby glanced down at her quickly and asked, "You all right, sugar?" Before she could answer he went on, "It's been pretty grueling, hasn't it, honey? There's been an awful lot of hard work, I know, but it's nearing the end now."

"Yes, dear, it's been hard work, but there has been so much pleasure connected with it, too. All the planning has been fun, but I'll really be glad to get all settled."

Robby continued to look at her; for some reason she didn't look just right to him. She felt his gaze and glanced up, and as she saw his eyes travel over her figure, a flush slowly spread over her face. Suddenly he demanded, "What goes on here? Out with it this instant!"

Putting her arms around him, she hid her face on his chest, then asked, "Why did you have to be so darn sharp? Couldn't you have waited one more day, before you got curious? Then I would have had the complete surprise tomorrow for you, when the furniture came!"

"Not really," he said in amazement. "I was only guessing and hoping, Betty! You mean honest and truly, one bedroom will have nursery furniture right away?"

She couldn't seem to answer aloud, just nodded her head up and down, there against his chest. His arms closed around her, and he demanded, "How long has this been going on? and the father-to-be has been left in blissful ignorance?"

"Almost five months," she informed him.

"Five months? How could I have been so stupid all that time? Shows how little attention I've been giving you this summer,

doesn't it?" He did a quick calculation in his mind. "Phew!" he exclaimed. "That didn't much more than get under the wire, did it?"

"Silly!" she laughed, then demanded, "how can you say such a thing? You know we've been married almost eight months!"

His arms tightened, and in a husky voice he said, "Darlingest, I know! I was only teasing, but frankly I'm completely floored." He was quiet for a few seconds, then exclaimed, "Say! Do you know what? That chap is going to be here in time to celebrate our first anniversary!"

"You goose!" And she leaned back and looked up into his face, then asked, "Aren't we shameful? Darling, it's no wonder I'm so terribly in love with you, for every time you open your mouth, you remind me of Pop in some way."

"That I like, for I can't think of a living soul I would like to remind you of more than your Pop. He with his ready wit and laughing blue eyes, who has a lovely daughter whom I happen to be hopelessly in love with."

They stood for a long while, silence between them. Betty glanced out over the fields of golden grain, for it was that time of the year again when it stood tall and straight, nodding and nodding in the breeze. As the setting sun caught it here and there, it looked like a great golden ocean.

Leaning her head against Robby's shoulder, she closed her eyes, and in a quiet, sincere voice said, "Thank You, Our Father, for all our worldly blessings; for our dear families; our friends; our beautiful new home; for each other, and the little one on his way; but most of all, thank you for this Land of Golden Wheat!"

Author's Note

Settlers from the midwestern part of the United States and the eastern and central provinces of Canada brought to Saskatchewan such farm associations as the Grange and the Patrons of Industry, but the first really significant Saskatchewan farm organization was the Territorial Association, formed at Indian Head in December, 1901. Saskatchewan at that time was still a division of the Northwest Territories, and remained so until 1905. The Territorial Association was composed of a rather militant group of farmers who were attempting to cut a great deal of red tape by obtaining for farmers the use of railroad loading platforms at shipping points where there were no grain elevators or where they felt that the prices and grain grades being offered by the elevator companies were too low. They also fought for and finally gained the right to use railway-car order books to order boxcars in the same way that the elevator companies could. Then, in 1906, the Territorial Association became known as the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association.

The farmers fought their way along. Finally came the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, which today is the largest grain-elevator organization in all of North America.

In 1926 the Farmers Union of Canada merged with the

Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association and formed the United Farmers of Canada, Saskatchewan Section.

In 1930 the Saskatchewan Farm-Labor Group was organized and began the political activity which, a couple of years later, led to the formation of the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation (whose name was shortened for everyday use to C.C.F.), which is now the party in power in the Province of Saskatchewan.

In Saskatchewan as in no other part of Canada the phrase *co-operative development* carries a meaning which is known to practically every man, woman and child. It is Canada's most "co-operative" province, and you see *Co-op* on grain elevators, milk wagons, oil trucks, honey jars, warehouses, and so on.

"In 1913 the first Agricultural Co-Operative Association Act was placed on the statute books, in order to enable groups to organize co-operatively. In 1951 approximately 485,000 members belonged to more than 1,099 co-ops, operating over 503 retail consumer places of business in the province. There has been a rapid expansion in the co-op movement, especially since 1938, when membership stood at 185,000, and assets were valued at less than \$40,000,000, as compared to the above figure of 485,000 members, with assets at nearly \$133,417,000. Keystone of government policy is the theory that the demand for co-operatives must come from the people themselves. Under no condition is promotional work undertaken to urge any group to organize co-operatively. If there is no economic need for a co-operative, there is no need for organization." (The above information has been furnished by the Bureau of Publications, Regina, Saskatchewan.)

However, free enterprise is also very much alive in Saskatchewan, for the cities and towns have their Rotary, Kiwanis, Kinsmen, and Lions Clubs; each has also its Board of Trade, Chamber of Commerce and Retail Merchants Association, and, in addition, its chapter of the Canadian Legion and of the Federated Labor Groups. So, taking the province as a whole, one finds that it does not differ a great deal from any other western section of this great continent of North America.

Qu'Appelle (pronounced *Kwah-péll*)

Qu'Appelle, located in beautiful Qu'Appelle Valley, is one of Saskatchewan's oldest towns, and many legends tell of the origin of the name. The name was first given to the river, which runs approximately twenty miles north of the village of Qu'Appelle; however, Fort Qu'Appelle, B'Say'Tah, Ketepwa, and Lebret are located directly on the river. Here are synopses of some of the legends:

(1) Daniel William Harmon visited the river on Sunday, March 11, 1804. He called it *Ca-ta-buy-se-pu*, or "River That Calls." "This stream is so named by the superstitious natives, who imagine that a spirit is constantly going up and down it; and they say that they often hear its voice distinctly, which resembles the cry of a human being." (From p. xxiii of a journal, by Daniel William Harmon, of travels and voyages in the interior of North America, printed at Andover by Flagg and Gould in 1820.)

(2) In 1858 Henry Youle Hind was told the following story by an old Indian, about seventy years of age, who lived at Fort Ellice. Hind rendered the Indian name as *Katapaywie*. "A solitary Indian was coming down the river in his canoe, many summers ago, when one day he heard a loud voice calling to him; he stopped and listened and again heard the same voice as before. He shouted in reply, but there was no answer. He searched everywhere around, but could not find the tracks of anyone. So from that time forth it was named the 'Who Calls River.'" (From Henry Youle Hind's narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857 and of the Assiniboine and Saskatchewan Exploring Expedition of 1858, printed in London by Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts in 1860.)

(3) Qu'Appelle is "a French translation of the Indian name *Katepwé*, meaning in English 'Who Calls.'" (Canada Geographic Board, *Place Names of Manitoba*, Ottawa, King's Printer, 1933.)

(4) "Early French settlers evidently appreciated the beautiful legend of the Qu'Appelle Valley, for they gave it a very appro-

priate name. There is an unusual echo in this valley, and the Indians believed it to be the voice of a beautiful young woman of the tribe who vanished in a most mysterious manner. According to the Indian story, the girl's lover called to her from the hills, and she started out in her canoe to meet him. After she had paddled some distance, a mist settled about her, and when it lifted she was gone, and was never seen again. Frequently her canoe appeared on the lake at twilight, but it always disappeared as her heartbroken lover approached it. Her spirit, however, still lingers in the valley, and when anyone shouts she asks, 'Who Calls?' 'Qu'Appelle?'" (Edna Baker, *Prairie Place Names*, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1928.)

(5) A somewhat similar version is given in the beautiful poem "Legend of the Qu'Appelle" in a book of verse titled *Flint and Feather*, by Emily Pauline Johnson, printed in Toronto by Musson in 1912.

(The foregoing quotations are drawn from the records of the Saskatchewan Archives Office of the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.)





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